

SC

MO

# THE GUIDING HAND;

OR,

SOME PHASES OF THE RELIGIOUS  
LIFE OF THE DAY.

BY

THE REV. E. A. STAFFORD, A.B.,

*Pastor of the Metropolitan Church,*

TORONTO.

---

TORONTO:

WILLIAM BRIGGS, 78 & 80 KING STREET EAST.

MONTREAL: C. W. COATES.

HALIFAX: S. F. HUESTIS.

[1887.]

---

---

ENTERED, according to Act of the Parliament of Canada, in the year one thousand eight hundred and eighty-seven, by WILLIAM BRIGGS, Book Steward of the Methodist Book and Publishing House, Toronto, at the Department of Agriculture.

---

---

## **Dedication.**

---

TO ALL WHO HONESTLY SEEK THE HIDDEN TRUTH OF THE ABIDING  
WORD, AND WHO EARNESTLY STRIVE TO TRANSLATE THIS  
EARTHLY LIFE INTO ITS HIGHER SPIRITUAL MEANING,  
THEIR FELLOW TOILER UP THE HEIGHTS  
BEYOND WHICH ALL KNOWLEDGE DWELLS,  
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATES  
THE FOLLOWING PAGES.



Th  
Th  
se  
in  
m

je  
Cl  
bo

to  
ca  
ea  
it  
th

be  
je  
hi  
se  
En  
th  
te  
th  
ex  
wi

## PREFACE.

---

THE contents of this book are sermons because they grew so. The writer does not think that they are very wonderful sermons. They are not presented here under any such impression. Possibly even he could have found something more astonishing in his own barrel.

But these are given to the public, first, because the subject is important and interesting. It belongs to the higher Christian life. The book is an effort to find an atmosphere both of common sense and of perfect purity.

The reader will trace simply an honest and earnest desire to raise to a higher level the average views of the Christian calling. To set forth a truly spiritual conception of this earthly life has been the aim; and the more as at every step it became more clear that, according to the Bible, God's thought for man rests wholly upon spiritual results.

A second reason for their appearance is that, after beginning, in his pulpit, the public discussion of the subject indicated in the title page, the author discovered that his own library contained nothing, not even one fugitive sermon, on the guidance of the Spirit, or of Providence. Enquiry revealed the fact that other clergymen had felt the same deficiency. A not exhaustive, but pretty extended, search of book stores brought out no treatise along this line. Then came an independent, careful, and thorough examination of what the Scriptures teach on the subject, with the result which these pages reveal.

Nothing appears here except what belongs to the exposition of the scripture involved, or was drawn out in answer to objections, or by questions and criticisms received during the public delivery of the discourses. Anything that may seem to have little connection with guidance, as perhaps the first number, and the seventh, eighth, and ninth, was thus drawn in, and became an essential part of this study as at first presented.

The work aims only at practical results, and studiously avoids any psychological questions which stood very temptingly along the way.

Contrary to custom, the author must own that since preaching the sermons he has tried to improve their form, and to make them as readable as he could. Hence the arrangement is different from the order followed in discussing the subject in the pulpit, but the substance is the same. Nothing now known has been subtracted, and but little added; but the outward dress has been a good deal changed, and if the subject does not interest anyone it will be because, under present conditions, the writer is absolutely incompetent to add any greater charm to it, and not because he did not think his readers worth trying to please.

But he hopes these pages will prove interesting, and that they will have many readers, and that all will receive much spiritual good from accompanying the author in this study.

With our feet on the threshold of yon dazzling mansions, we may together look back over the way, and understand better than now how we were guided to such grand fruition of our earthly life, and how, through so much darkness, we were enabled to land safely on the shores of endless light and blessedness; and until that glad day

I am, my brothers,

Yours in the faith,

E. A. S.

## CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE
I. THE FATHER'S CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE - - -	9
"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."—MATT. x. 29-31.	
II. GOD OUR LEADER AND GUIDE - - -	30
"A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps."—PROVERBS xvi. 9.	
III. THE DIVINE PURPOSE IN GUIDING MEN - - -	49
"If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—ROMANS viii. 13, 14.	
IV. THE GREAT PURPOSE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE - - -	66
"Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: I flee unto Thee to hide me. Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God: Thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."—PSALM cxliii. 9, 10.	

	PAGE
V. OUR GUIDE IN TEMPORAL THINGS - - -	76
<p>“And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drougt, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.” —ISAIAH lviii. 11.</p>	
VI. THE CHRISTIAN'S WALK NOT LED IN DETAIL -	98
<p>“I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.”—GENESIS xvii. 1.</p>	
VII. THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT TO HUMAN INFIRMITY	126
<p>“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” —ROMANS viii. 26.</p>	
VIII. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S INTERCESSION - - -	147
<p>“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” ROMANS viii. 26.</p>	
IX. FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT - - - - -	168
<p>“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”—EPHESIANS v. 18.</p>	

# THE GUIDING HAND.

---

## I.

### *The Father's Care for His People.*

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."—MATT. x. 29-31.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."—LUKE xii. 6, 7.

WE propose to study the influence of our Heavenly Father's guiding hand upon human life and destiny.

The present discourse will be confined to the laying of a secure basis upon which to pursue all our future investigations. We shall not get far into the main topic, but if we can fix in our minds a strong persuasion that God knows all about us, and that He cares for us as individuals, these grand and luminous truths will prepare us for every further revelation of His goodness and love which may fall upon our path. God knows and cares. This is the key-board by which we shall

interpret the grand anthem of His loving-kindness and tender mercy, sung through all the ages, and written in many wonderful deliverances of His people, and in fiery cloud and pillar raised above the path of His wandering children everywhere over this wide wilderness world.

I. 1. The substance of the passages standing at the beginning of this discourse is, first, that God knows all about His creatures, and therefore is able to help them in every time of need; and second, that He cares for them, and therefore will help them whenever in His infinite wisdom He deems it to be necessary.

The first of these truths is brought out in the first part of the reference to the sparrows, and in the assertion about the hairs of our heads. The second is presented in the second reference to the sparrows.

2. The structure of the passage in both Matthew and Luke is worth studying. In both places there is, to begin with, a statement about the market value of sparrows, with the assertion that God knows all about these little birds. Then comes the declaration that the hairs of our heads are all numbered. This seems at first sight about as foreign as anything could be to the preceding references to the sparrows. After this the passage closes with another statement about the sparrows, comparing a disciple with a sparrow in respect of value.

Now, if such a passage were a human composition, we would probably think that it had been carelessly written, and the words thrown together without much



study as to the arrangement; and, in our wisdom, we would be inclined to throw the two clauses concerning the sparrows together, and bring in the statement about the hairs of our heads afterwards. But when in this book, given under Divine inspiration, we find any truth presented in a particular form, and especially when, as in this case, the Saviour's words are reported by two different writers in the same form, it becomes us to look at them a second time, and enquire what mode of interpretation is suggested by the form in which they are presented.

Pursuing this wise course here, we naturally conclude at once that the first clause referring to the sparrows, and the statement about our numbered hairs, both convey the same truth, and so must be taken together; while the remaining clause about the sparrows relates to some other truth. This is undoubtedly the fact, and here we have our first hint of the meaning of the delightful passage. It asserts, first, that God knows about His people and can help them, and second, that He cares for, and if need be, will help them.

All this will appear whether we take a strictly literal view of the text, or regard it as highly figurative. Literally, the idea would be conveyed, that in some way the mind of the Deity keeps a constant enumeration of the number of sparrows which fall hour by hour, and where, and why; and that a similar enumeration of the number of hairs on every head in the whole world, corrected moment by moment, as the



hairs fall out from any cause, is carried in his thought. From all this various inferences might be drawn; as, for example, that as in age and sickness the hair falls away, the Divine tenderness is especially manifested in age and affliction. Seeing that other passages prove this, no great error could arise from such a way of presenting the text. But considering the utter uselessness, in either earth or heaven, of such knowledge as this literal rendering implies, the simple statement of what it brings out of the text ought to be enough to set it aside for a better, and one more full of comfort and inspiration.

The whole passage is highly figurative, and conveys a meaning much more intense than any literal rendering of the words would carry to the heart.

3. Take the first clause: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" These birds were used for food, and were considered a great delicacy, well suited to tempt the appetite of sick people, and, being very small, we would suppose that they would have been costly, beyond the reach of any but the most wealthy. But they were actually among the most numerous and fruitful of all the feathered tribes, and were so abundant in the market that a farthing would purchase two of them. One of them was not worth enough to set any price upon it, but two must go together to be equal to the value of the smallest coin in use. Luke says: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?" Add the meaning conveyed here to the words of Matthew, and you get a glimpse of the market parlance of the

time. A dealer would say to an enquiring customer: "The sparrows are two for a farthing, but if you will take two farthings' worth you may have five."

And yet God's possible knowledge extends to every one of these almost valueless birds. This declaration is designed to convey to us an idea of the minuteness of the knowledge which God can command by simply turning a thought in any particular direction. Herein comes to us a real comfort. He is fully capable of looking at a glance to the bottom of all the minutest affairs that can concern us, and therefore we will suffer nothing through His ignorance, as we would be sure sometimes to do if it were a king, or a human parent, who held our destiny in his hands.

II. The expression about our hairs being all numbered is also a strong figurative statement, conveying the same meaning as the words just examined. It is an assertion of knowledge, and not of affection. It is often quoted as a declaration of God's special love to His disciples, but, as will soon appear, much is gained, and nothing lost, by taking it as a strong assertion of possible knowledge concerning the minutest details of our lives, with just a clear, suggestive hint of the declaration of loving care which is to follow.

1. The first reason for this explanation is that the language of Scripture, as far as we know, is adapted to our human understandings. Any truth conveyed by a reference to our lives takes hold upon facts as they exist among men. But among no people, savage or civilized, is it customary to demonstrate affection

by counting the hairs on the head of the person loved. Take the deep and pure affection for parent, and sister, and brother, and successively for sweetheart, and wife, and child. Who ever thought of showing his love by counting the hairs on the head of any one of them? Some philosopher, for purely scientific purposes, will count the hairs on a head, but it is never done as an expression of affection. It is not uncommon to keep some of the hair of the dead and the distant, not because that is most loved, but because it is the only part of the actual person of a loved one that we can keep.

Now, is it likely that the great Lord would seek to convey the tenderness of His love toward us by a statement which could remind no human creature of anything he ever saw or heard of? It is not like the course He pursues in every other case of which we have any knowledge. He sometimes conveys an idea of His regard for us by a reference to something in human life which is observed every day, and which every heart can understand and feel. Thus we are told the Father gave His only begotten Son. Now, everyone knows the tenderness of parental love, and so can understand God's love by the sacrifice it prompted Him to make. He shows how willing He is to give the Holy Spirit by reminding us of the willingness of human parents to give good gifts unto their children. Our hearts at once take in the full meaning, and are sensibly moved by the analogy. We never let go the impression made upon us. So, too, He

compares His chastening rod upon us to the punishments we received from our fathers in the flesh. In this way we are forced to feel His tenderness even when He lays His rod upon us. If it had been the custom to count the hairs on the heads of those we love, to prove how well we love them, then this text had started the tenderest feelings of which our hearts are capable. But this not being the case, we cannot but take this language as designed to convey to us an idea of His intimate knowledge of us, and of His abundant ability to help whenever it is needed.

2. Another reason for this view is that the hair is not a source of pain to anyone. It is not a channel through which great surging waves of agony are ever poured upon the soul. No one ever goes to a doctor to ask him why this or that hair is causing him so much distress. I have looked upon human suffering when every nerve seemed a stream of living fire. I have seen my fellows going down through death's gates of relief, which stood open just a little way before them, on slow descending steps, that, for pain, seemed made of red-hot plates of iron. The teeth at times were set, and the eye blazed with a fury of intense, unutterable agony; then the soul, lashed beyond endurance, would scream out, demanding relief or escape. The pleading look asking for alleviation which no human hand could bring, and the fearful cry calling to God for release, as the slow hours moved on toward the dawn, wrote pages in my life's book which no human eye has ever read or can read, but which even yet patiently

wait for God to explain. I passed through all that, and carried away a heart bursting with anguish. But I remembered that through all those terrible scenes nothing seemed so utterly unmoved and unconcerned as the tossed and matted locks of the sufferer. No quivering pain ever disturbed a single hair. What affection, under such circumstances, could reach the heart through the assertion that some one had counted up all those unfeeling hairs? But oh, if I could have turned to some such word as, "I know the number of thy fire-enkindled nerves, and their paths through thy quivering frame," that would have borne to the pierced and bleeding heart the comforting assurance that soon that long night of agony would pass more swiftly by, and the glad morning spread its awakening light over the hills again!

I know that, under such strong tension of anguish, the thought did turn with comfort to many an appropriate promise. There was the assurance given to Isaiah, "I have seen thy tears;" and David's prayer, "Put Thou my tears into Thy bottle. Are they not in Thy book?" and the assurance, "The Lord will strengthen him on the bed of languishing; Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." And again, in Isaiah, "When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." All these words seemed brimful of love and tenderness. These tears fall in His sight. This fire enters into His soul also. This terrible hour of anguish will live likewise in His memory. But on

what ground of appeal could I turn to this assertion, that our hairs are numbered, for any comfort? Simply as an assurance that God knows all. Nothing passes beneath His knowledge. He is not ignorant of this darkly written memory of anguish and despair. Knowing it, He can bring relief to the groaning sufferer; He can shorten these weary hours and hasten on the dawn.

3. A third reason for this interpretation is, that the hair is never a cause of disgrace or deformity to anyone. It never brings anyone into contempt. If a child loses an eye, or arm, or foot, he must go through life deformed by so much; and there must often come to him the bitter thought, Why has this fallen upon me, when so many enjoy the full use of all their members? It is an abiding and cruel trial to him. But no such affliction ever comes through the hair. If, as age advances, it turns white, or falls off entirely, there is no shame associated with it. No man needs to cover up the change, for the growing silvery whiteness, or the baldness of advancing years, is an addition to manly comeliness, rather than a loss of beauty. Why, then, should the hair be chosen as the instrument through which to express the tenderest affection and sympathy for us?

4. But there is an appropriateness in using this vehicle to convey to us an idea of God's minute knowledge of our affairs, because nothing about us is so numerous and difficult to number as our hair. Nothing could be a stronger assertion of intimate

knowledge about us than the declaration that our hairs are all numbered. Then there is no part of our person which we can lose with less inconvenience than the hair. Therefore, such knowledge indicates that God is mindful even of the minutest and least important affairs. It is as though a human father, wishing to assure a daughter living away from him and yet dependent upon him, that he would not allow her to want, and she should ask, "But, father, how will you know when I am in need?" and he should be able to reply, "Why, my child, I know all about your affairs, even to the contents of your ash-barrel." The daughter would rest perfectly contented that she should not suffer through her father's ignorance, if she could be assured that he has some means of knowing about her affairs, even to such minute and unimportant things as what her barrel of ashes in the yard may contain. This assurance of knowledge is only less important to her than the assurance of her father's continuing love. So is it with all the followers of our Lord. This assurance of His knowledge is clearly given, and that concerning His love, in equal fulness, will not be wanting.

5. Let us now advance to another point in connection with this knowledge. It has been spoken of here as possible knowledge. God has been described as able to know with a thought, or at a glance upon anything in question. It is both reverent and correct to speak of anything as known by Him, when there is full power to know all about it by looking into it. We often speak



of ourselves as knowing things which we have not looked into, when we are confident that we would understand them as soon as we should open the book. Take, for example, a work on common arithmetic. This particular author's work you have never seen before ; yet, if asked, you would say that you know what it teaches under the first six simple rules. Without hesitation you would undertake to teach all that this book contains on those subjects. You say correctly enough that you know what is in the book, though you never opened it. You actually do not know whether the first sum in addition requires you to add together 8, 5, 3, 6, and 9, or 7, 2, 1, 4, and 8. And so of every other question contained in that part of the book. Yet you know them. That is, if it were necessary to look into them, you would find no difficulty in reading and understanding them all. If you were going to conduct a pupil through the book, then you would examine it all. You would open at the simple rules, and either yourself work out every question or see that the pupil did it.

Now, here is an intelligent and reasonable illustration of God's Omniscience in its relation to many of the least important conditions of human life. There are millions of things passing every day, if we take the whole world into our count, which are of no consequence to God. Does this seem to be a careless statement ? Is it said trifles determine destinies ? Yes, but all trifles do not determine destinies. Waste is the rule of nature : where one seed grows, myriads



perish: where one flower brings ripened fruit, whole galaxies of blooming beauty are destroyed. So, many trifles are fruitless and aimless. They are nothing to God. Why, they are of no consequence to ourselves, or to anyone else. They are in no way associated with sin or holiness. They add nothing to the burden of human guilt or misery, nothing to its hope or fear. They quicken no note of gladness in the hearts of angels or men. The tabulated knowledge of them would be no addition to the accumulated treasures of knowledge in either earth or heaven. God knows them just as a scholar knows how to read a simple book into which he never looked. If any exigency made it necessary to open them up, one glance of His would sound them to their depths and trace all their possible relations. The slightest touch of His thought would write out on the instant the number of hairs on the head of any man who might be threatened by his enemies, and tell each hair that had fallen through their evil designs. With no more effort could he explore the wide fields of space, and read where an unoffending sparrow had fallen through malignity, or theft, or passion. It is therefore clear that no one will be overlooked in the multitudinous rush of events and circumstances crowding upon His attention. His countless, ever-growing family is none too large for His abounding care.

6. Now, this seems to be just the comfort which we need. Men often suffer in life because those who would be most willing to help them do not know of

their straits. Day by day in every city some are starving and dying in neglect. Yet it is safe to say that no one would ever want either food or clothing if only the right persons knew of his need. Over all the country are young men and maidens thirsting for knowledge, and seeking it under most unfavorable conditions. Reading in the flickering firelight. Snatching vagrant moments from labors sufficient to more than fill up every waking hour. In painful straits for want of books. Nothing in their case is sufficient for the ambition that aims at the attainment of knowledge. Yet if the right persons knew of their toiling effort they would want neither books, nor teachers, nor conveniences, for an hour. But the right persons do not know, and so, by the thousand, our suffering and weary fellow-beings die, starved in body and in mind.

More in the past than now churches paid their preachers in "kind," as it was called. It is a vicious system, for it allows every member of the church and congregation to think that there is no need of him doing anything, because there are so many to support the preacher. And it makes the preacher feel like a beggar in making his wants known. Some prosperous farmer will relieve him in a patronizing manner, as if it were an act of pure grace and there were no justice demanding it. Many a sensitive man has seen his family in great straits rather than go and ask someone for food. I knew a case where for more than a week a minister's family had nothing in the house but some

cornmeal, which they prepared with water and salt, and tried to live upon it. The circuit steward happened to drop in one day and learned the condition of things. He was really a kind man, but he was the victim of a bad system. When he found out what the family was suffering, he said in genuine sorrow, "O, if I had only known! Why did you not tell me?"

Now, in contrast with all that men do and neglect to do, God gives us this assurance that His knowledge can at a glance take in all the minute details of our lives, and therefore we may be certain that no one will suffer when His help is needed. It is not necessary for us to feel sure that He is holding us by the hand in everything we do, but we can be confident He will do so whenever we need such intimate interposition.

III. 1. We come now to the last clause of the text, "Ye are of more value than many sparrows." This is a strong declaration of God's loving care over His disciples. It is one of His immeasurable sayings, and in this it is like His "so loved," and His "so great salvation," and "whosoever will." It is left indefinite because it is one of those things which do not admit of admeasurement. It is easy to tell how much a sparrow is worth, but there is no arithmetic in earth or heaven which can exactly measure how high a value God sets upon the least of His saints. It is as well to say he is worth as much as many sparrows as to say anything else, because it cannot be accurately told in any terms. We feel the strong impulse given to us in reading the passage through, and at the end we are left with the

clearest possible intimation that God cares for us, and He has already assured us of His most intimate knowledge, so that if we suffer or need it will not be because He either does not know or cannot reach our case, or is indifferent to us. Therefore we know that He both knows and cares.

2. Now, the worst affliction is to feel that we are left wholly alone in any passage of deep distress. No matter what it is, there will be relief in knowing simply that someone cares. A little child hurt her hand, and in her pain she ran up to her father, busy with his work and deeply engaged in his papers and books, and told him of her hurt. He pushed her to one side, and said sharply, "Go away, do not bother me." The child turned aside more wounded than ever. She told her mother about it, and she excused the father, saying to the child, "He is always very busy, and he could not have cured it anyway." "No," said the child, "he could not cure it, but he might have just said, 'I am sorry,' and that would have helped me some."

There are a great many weeping children who just want someone to say, "I am sorry," in their trouble. But to be left altogether alone in the night, to drink our cup of pain, and feel that no one comes near because no one cares, adds infinitely to the deep intensity of the cup. To lose wealth and position, or to be defeated in our conflict, and then on this to have to add the bitter conviction that no one cares! Oh, that is woe, indeed! But if through the deepest darkness, and the mid-

night silences, and in our torturing pain, we may but hear our Father's whispered voice, telling of love and care, what can we not endure? All the ills of life would be almost entirely healed by our simply knowing that God is sorry in our sorrow. Pain and sickness and death come alike to the evil and the good, and no prayer or faith can turn them aside. But our tears will not be so bitter, nor our days so dark, nor our nights so long, nor the grave we have left to be buried under the fast falling snow so cold and desolate, if through it all we may but take the comforting assurance to our hearts that "God cares." This is the climax in the meaning of this text, toward which all the other parts are laboring up. He knows. There will be no failure for want of a knowledge of our pain or need. All this with a rising inflection toward the grand assertion that He cares, and therefore, whenever in His wisdom it is deemed best, He will come into our human life with all the power of His good right hand.

We may therefore lift above our heads as a strong shield the "Fear not, therefore," of this text, and turn our faces bravely toward all the elements which combine against us. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

3. We are not assured by all that is here placed before us that we shall have an easy passage through life—that God will always step in just in time, and save us from loss and grief and disaster, or even from death, at the hands of our enemies.

This address was given to the twelve apostles just before they started out on an expedition attended with much exposure and great danger. These words were in particular calculated to brace up their minds for any sharp struggle that should come. But there is an indication that while at every step God would know and care about them, still some of them would fall in their work. The verse immediately following the text is very suggestive and touching: "Whosoever shall confess Me before men." They who heard this knew that at that time to confess Jesus meant a severe trial of faith. Now, the word "confess" has come to have a very simple meaning. It is the assuming of easy obligations to Christ in the presence of His Church, and that is all. There is no danger, no reproach or shame, scarcely indeed any self-denial, as churches go now-a-days, in confessing Christ. The person gains dignity and influence, and even the gratification of his pride, and an increase of his friends among the best people living, and loses nothing. But the men who first heard this discourse found no such pleasant meaning as this in the word "confess" as applied to Christ. They knew that it meant to stand before magistrates, and even kings, and false accusers, for the sake of Christ. It meant to own Him when to own Him was to be hurried to prison, and often to a cruel death. And they all proved this in their individual experiences. They had no present life worth living. They were hunted down. They were persecuted, and finally, with one exception, brought to untimely deaths by cruel hands.

Life to them was simply a school in which to learn, what at last they did learn well, that the present is nothing, but the future life is everything. When they turned away from the presence of Jesus after hearing this glowing address, they saw the sky already growing black with the promise of their coming trial and doom.

Yet they went forth with confidence, because they had received into their hearts the abiding truth that God both knows and cares. This sustained them later on, when they had come better to understand God's grand designs. Then they saw clearly that if, in any great pressure of woe, He should deem it best, He would come to them, and the mouths of lions should be closed, and cursing men should be dumb in their presence. But if not, then they could die as He had done before them, and even in the bitterness of death they would be consoled by knowing that in death, as in life, He would know of their case, and would care for them, and would be with them.

4. In every age His saints have been set to learn the same truth. The race has taken it up but slowly. Men strain their eyes to read God's loving care in all the good that comes to them for the present time, and sometimes even they make their religion no better than the servant of their selfishness and worldliness, wanting to use God's care for them for their own ends in this present time. But the true light is far above and beyond. God's care and knowledge are pledged in our behalf that we linger not too fondly on these



earthly paths, but at last get our eyes opened upon the hills of the shining shore of that better world ahead of us, yet, perhaps, not so very far away. His care is pledged not to allow our feet to take root in this world. Therefore, what seems to be evil is often allowed to follow the paths of the saints. "God buries His workmen but carries on His work." Some are allowed to die and leave unfinished a work which, to all human appearances, no other hands can carry on as well. Yet there is no disappointment to His far-reaching plans in this. "He moves to His great ends unthwarted by the ill."

In September, 1884, after a visit at the Morley Mission, sitting among the leaping hills at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, the Rev. John McDougall started to drive me over the prairie, a distance of some forty or fifty miles, to the latest birth among the many cities of the fruitful West—the new city of Calgary. On our way he told me about his father's death, which occurred out on the open plains. An hour before dark on a winter afternoon, he left his company and started for their camp, and they never saw him alive again. When the rest of the company reached the camp and discovered that he had not come in, they rode hither and thither, firing guns to guide his steps, if perchance he was still alive and within hearing; and for nine days his children, and their friends among the Indians, scoured the prairie in search of him, until at last they came upon his body in its quiet resting-place. "Did he lose the trail?" I asked. "No," replied his son;



"he knew the prairie as a school-boy knows the playground. No, he did not lose his way, but he must have been suddenly seized with some bewildering illness, of which he had before showed some premonitory symptoms, and he wandered about, for how many hours God's watchful stars that know the secrets of the night alone could tell: then, at last, he sought out a level spot in the prairie, lay down upon his back, folded his hands across his breast, and so, as he looked away into the clear heavens, his spirit went out on its far journey alone." The son told me all this as we rode along, and by and by he pointed a little way off, and said, "There is where we found father." Then, when we had driven on for an hour, he pointed out a spot, "There is where we camped that night after we found him." And then he added, as his memory actively reviewed the scenes, "Oh, what a night that was! We pitched our tent, and made a fire and sat around it. But it could not seem right without him sitting in his accustomed place by the fire, and then I thought of him out in the sleigh, cold, frozen and dead! And, oh, to think that we could not bring him in with us, but must leave him there in the cold alone! I could not stand it, and I went out and sat upon the sleigh by his side, under the clear sky, and it seemed as if my heart would break. My brother came out there and sat with me, and after a time he said, "John, there is no God; there cannot be, or such a thing would not be allowed to happen. Oh, my father was a good man, and God would have taken care of him if He would of anyone."

Now, this young man was not profane, nor irreverent, but he was, at the moment, only one of earth's crowding thousands, who have not yet come to understand that God seeks spiritual ends, and not temporal, for His people; that His care may abound as much in sorrow's terrible hour as when the calm sunshine fills us with its warmth and wealth.

The true explanation of all songs unsung, and all pages unread, in this world of tears, and sorrow, and poverty, and blood, and death, we may not wholly reach; but it is enough for us to know that through it all He knows and cares. The good may die, the benevolent may be stricken down to poverty, but as long as we can rest confident that in it all He both knows and cares, we need not restrain our song, for out of the night shall come a better day. A new morning of higher hopefulness, that points down along its hours to greater certainties than we have ever taken hold upon here, is at hand.

That assurance that we need not to fear anything, because God both knows all and cares for us all the time, and will help us in our straits whenever He deems it necessary, is the proper basis for our study of the traces of the Divine hand in guiding the affairs of human life, and will furnish us the key to many a difficult problem.

## II.

### God our Leader and Guide.

“A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.” —PROV. xvi. 9.

**I**F we believe the Bible at all we must admit that God exercises continually a controlling influence over the lives of men. Any possible interpretation of this book will lead us to this conclusion. Under all dispensations, in the varied experiences of every class of men, and over every condition of human life, He is represented to our thought as the supreme Leader and Guide, and His hand is powerfully felt in shaping those events which determine destiny. In the pages of almost every writer who has contributed to the sacred volume, some passages occur which teach that in some form God is supreme over the occurrences of every day, either by causing or controlling them. Our human thoughts may construct the architecture of a life and suit it to our will, but He will have that life built after His own design. “A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.”

We come then to the study of the question, how God influences the lives of men. In seeking our

answer to this question, we trace His hand in two methods of guidance.

I. First, by the Holy Spirit acting directly upon men's minds. In this way they are guided from within.

II. Then He acts upon them from without, by controlling the events which occur, after an order which is commonly called Providence, and which includes all special providences.

I. 1. Let us first consider the guidance of the Holy Ghost acting directly upon us. The fact of such guidance is made clear by many passages: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 13, 14). Also: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. v. 16).

2. Now, how does the Holy Spirit guide men? By working strong impressions upon the mind, and by causing thoughts to arise which, but for Him, would have had no existence. No law of association can account for them. They cannot be traced to any other cause. He may affect us through our thoughts, or affections, or feelings, or desires, or senses.

How shall we explain the following circumstance? A man had been a member of the Church for many years. He was known as a tried and faithful Christian. One morning he found among his letters one, the stamp on which had not been cancelled. Naturally

the first thought was, that that stamp might be used again. But he was not a thief, and he had never got one cent dishonestly. He was in no need, that he should feel inclined to begin to steal now. Under any other circumstances the opportunity of stealing three cents would not have touched him. It would not have been inside his world. But an uncanceled stamp on a letter which has passed through the mail has a kind of fascination about it; and so the thought kept returning to his mind that he might use that stamp again. Then he found himself growing intensely uncomfortable. The shadow grew thick and dark over his mind, until presently he tore the stamp off the envelope and destroyed it. At once the cloud faded away. The discomfort gave place to a sense of inward satisfaction, much as when one sees some threatening danger pass him by uninjured.

Now, how are we to account for this change of feeling? The only rational explanation is that he was led by the Spirit. As the possibility, not to say danger, in this case, of doing a dishonest act grew upon the man, the Spirit gave him an intimation by bringing upon his mind some shadow of the distress which one must have after doing a wrong deed. This was a warning that he was in danger. But when he resolutely rendered it impossible to commit the threatening sin, then the Spirit gave His approving testimony by pouring a sense of inward comfort upon him. The Spirit led him by creating certain impressions upon his soul.

Suppose you account for this experience by saying

that it was simply the testimony of the man's conscience. It amounts to the same thing. Conscience is never a safe guide except when it is enlightened by the Holy Spirit. A good conscience is in one sense the approving voice of the Holy Ghost speaking to the heart.

In any case the Spirit can lead any who are willing to be led, by bringing a strong impression upon the mind, or by causing thoughts to leap up which would not have arisen in the ordinary course of things, or by pouring a current of powerful feeling upon the soul, or by arousing a great fear. The following is an illustration of His guidance under somewhat different conditions from the foregoing case. A young man, a few months after his conversion, had an offer of a certain business. Now, the work was not bad in itself, but in view of what it required of the person attending to it, and of the associations into which it must necessarily throw him, this man afterwards felt through all his riper years, that, had he undertaken it, it would have proved his ruin for this world and the next. But, inexperienced as he was when the offer was made to him, he saw none of the threatening dangers, and so he went forward to the extent of entering into a contract to purchase the business, plant, etc. for a certain sum, and at a time in the future agreed upon, to pay the money and take up the work. The bargain was only closed when he began to experience a deep inward distress, and a fearful foreboding as of some fast approaching calamity. He did not under-

stand it. Everything about the bargain he had made seemed full of promise for him. What was there to dread? But still his distress grew wonderfully, until he felt himself overshadowed by some terrible impending blow. There was nothing to connect this with the bargain he had made but the fact that it came upon him immediately after making it. The other party to the contract was about going away. There was but a moment. He abruptly asked to see the paper he had signed. It was given to him and at once destroyed, and never a happier man entered upon his daily duties than did that young man on the morning in question.

Now, it was long after that day before he came to regard the experience as a marvellous escape from threatened ruin, and then it occurred to him that he had been led by the Holy Spirit away from the danger. What better explanation is needed? Certainly it is possible for the Spirit to create impressions upon the mind, independently of all outward conditions, and to give thoughts which could arise in no other way. The Bible teaches nothing on the subject different from this, and experience reveals nothing further.

There is nothing to show that these communications are made in human language, or through an audible voice. Good men may sometimes say that a word came to them from the Spirit, and that is proper enough for general discourse, because we think in words, and do not as a rule think without them; but calm and thoughtful persons will at once interpret an assertion



about receiving a communication from the Spirit in words as simply meaning that the Spirit put a thought into the mind, and unconsciously to himself, from the habit of thought, the man's own words came at once to clothe the thought.

3. Nor are we to understand that this guidance of the Spirit subverts the human will. Those who "are led by the Spirit," their wills concurring, are the sons of God. The leading is not driving, or compelling, but drawing, by securing the agreement of the man's will with the will of God. The Spirit guides by influencing, suggesting, enlightening, and supporting, but not by destroying the person's freedom of action.

4. Again, this guidance is something special to the believer in Christ, and therefore is to be distinguished from the Spirit's all-pervading presence and influence. The Spirit is everywhere. It is correct to say that by His direction the roots of the grass are fed, and leaves and flowers spread their beauty over the tree, and scatter their fragrance throughout the air. By Him savage beasts roam through the forest, and the monsters of the deep have their food, and the countless insects of the air learn their harmonies. So, too, when, as a messenger of Providence, a bird sings in a tree above my window, and awakens me from slumber just in time to save some man's life, it is correct to say that the Spirit guided that bird in its course, and brought it to the right spot just at the right time.

But what the Scriptures mean when they teach that He exercises a guiding influence over the life of



a saint, is something wholly different from this general, universal presence. Just how He creates food for a blind mole, and then leads the helpless creature to the spot where that food may be found, is altogether wonderful; but His guidance of the human soul is better and higher than that. A sheep is provided for by this Spirit, but the sheep is not therefore my brother by fellowship with me in the same guiding influence from the hand of my Heavenly Father.

Let it be here noted that in all that will be said in these pages about the guidance of the Holy Spirit, His special work in the hearts of the children of God is referred to, and not that general influence whereby He pervades the whole universe with His power, and with unslumbering care provides for every creature his needed good.

II. 1. Let us now turn to the consideration of the second agency whereby the Lord directs the lives of men. He acts upon them from without, ordering, directing and controlling the events which occur around them in such a way as to move them according to His own plan, and to work out in their lives the ends which He seeks. This is called the order of Divine Providence.

But there is what is known as a general Providence, and a particular Providence. The first includes God's constant care of everything. It is the exercise of His infinite energy throughout the whole vast fabric of the created universe; not recreating it, but perpetuating what He has made, and causing the movements of

numberless worlds in their orbits, and the shining of myriads of suns, and the rushing of mighty waters, and the growth of great forests, and the living and dying and general habits of all living creatures, to proceed for ever in a uniform order. There is nothing—not a leaf that waves in the air, nor the tiniest insect, nor the savagest beast, nor the most poisonous reptile, nor the meanest and most sinful of men—but partakes of the benefits of this infinite, exhaustless, all-embracing care of the Creator.

“Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.”

“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

“He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

This care of the Almighty over all His works proceeds upon a uniform plan. In the days of Adam, and before, the streams flowed toward the sea, just as they do now. First the leaf, then the flower, then the fruit; growth followed by decay; youth fast running into age;—this with never-ceasing change, yet with unbroken monotony forever in the order of the change—this was the course of nature in the beginning, and it still is so.

"O time and change ! O sleepless, ruthless pair !  
Where'er men flee they trace your footsteps there !  
Your hands are spread o'er nature's smiling face,  
Your rugged touch appals our trembling race !  
In birth of fruit all bloom and fragrance die !  
While summer breathes the winter's hosts are nigh !  
As hoary wisdom comes to regal sway,  
Youth's grace and beauty yield in swift decay !"

What has occurred will occur again in its own time and order, and so on forever.

2. This uniformity in the Deity's mode of working has furnished one of the greatest puzzles of modern times. It is solved around the question, What is a law of nature ? There is one sense in which a law of nature is understood to be an abiding, ever-active force. But, also, men have found in this uniformity the significance of a law. Because the processes of nature go on in a uniform order, they say there is a law which compels this, and then claim that because of this law things could not possibly proceed in any other manner. They see uniformity, then they say that it is caused by a law, and then they affirm that things could not possibly be otherwise, because of this law. And so, entering their circle on one side, they have chased themselves around the circle to the point where they entered, and then have repeated the same course over and over again.

With such reasoning the saints of God have been assaulted, and almost driven away from their altar of prayer, and their confidence in any special providence whereby they might be benefited has been much shaken.

3. There are some indications that with many the tendency is toward a belief in a general providence, in the benefits of which all things partake, and a weakening of confidence in any special interference of God in human affairs for the relief or help of any in particular. Thirty years ago the able works placed in the hands of Theological students in one influential Church taught them that "to every real member of the body of Christ, the providence of God is special; in other words, they are individually considered by the Sovereign Ruler in the administration of the affairs of this life." Now, in the not less able volumes which have supplanted these works of a former day, in a lengthy and elaborate chapter on the providence of God, no mention is made of any special consideration of particular cases at all.

Under such circumstances it is both timely and necessary to speak with confidence of a special providence as one of the ways in which God influences and guides a human life.

4. Rightly viewed, advanced discoveries throw no real difficulty in the way of such interference. The whole question turns on the meaning of the word "law" as applied to nature.

Now, in this connection, this word can only have an accommodated meaning. What is a law? There is first a written rule. This rule is understood to regulate the conduct of all to whom it applies. There must be some power behind it which can compel all to whom it is applied to observe it. Without this

power it is not in any true sense a law at all. Take, for example, any law of our nation. It applies to all the people of this land. Behind it is all the power of the Government to compel all to yield obedience to it. Here, then, are three things in every true law :

(1) A written or understood prescription.

(2) Uniformity of action under its application.

(3) Power to compel that uniformity of action in case there is, on the part of any, an unwillingness to fall into that uniform course. These three are all essential to a true law.

Now, let us see how this word has been played upon in speaking of the laws of nature. Men have noticed that there is a uniform course of nature through all the ages. But what about the power which lies behind that uniformity and causes it? They have not discovered any such power, but taking its existence for granted, they have simply called that power a law, as though this was all there is in a law. They put some force between God and the uniform course of nature. They don't know what it is, but they call it a law ; and then, because a law must cause uniformity of action, they go on to teach that there cannot possibly be any variations from the uniformity of nature without destroying the law.

But Science has never discovered any power identical with what it calls the laws of nature. All it knows is that there is uniformity ; that as things have been they will continue to be.

The whole is explained in a line. All that really

concerns us now in the expression "law of nature" is the observed uniformity of the course of nature. The hand of the Deity is the power which lies behind this uniformity and causes it. Things proceed in a uniform order because God wants them to be so. It is His general plan of working, either by His immediate presence or by some force which He has created in nature, and which He constantly controls. He continues this plan from day to day, from age to age. But it follows that He can change this course if He will. Any forces in nature which are not His ever-present hand constantly working, are subject to His control at will, and so need not be dwelt upon particularly here. Nothing that could be said of them would change the argument. No one knows anything about them, anyway. Their existence is only a grand mental conception.

5. However, it is not necessary that He change this uniform course in order to give us special providences for the guidance and shaping of men's lives. It will help our confidence in such Divine interference to have any thought of difficulty in the way of it removed out of the way; but even if this were impossible—though, as we have seen, it is not—still we could have a special providence easily enough. His uniform course of action along one line can easily be made to prevent any disaster which might seem inevitable from the uniform course of events along another line.

We can see examples of this within the narrow compass of our own operations. When boys, a number of us went into a saw-mill which was at the time

standing idle. We thought it would be royal sport to set it agoing all of ourselves. So uniting our strength we hoisted the gate and let on the water, and it started the slumbering old wheel. The whole machinery was soon in full operation. But we knew nothing about managing the vast machine, and it became evident pretty quickly that immense damage would be done if we could not stop it. We tried in vain to shut off the water, but did not know enough to do this. We were in no worse plight than many older heads have often been in, in starting up a power which they could neither control nor shut off again. Meanwhile it was tearing away with fast increasing force. Just before any great harm had been wrought a strong man came rushing into the mill, almost out of breath, for hearing the mill he thought some mischief was on hand, and had hastened to the spot in much alarm, and was just in time to do what we could not accomplish, and stop the mill.

Now, here is an illustration of a simple special providence, yet meeting every demand of the occasion. No law of nature was interfered with, yet the mischievous boys were saved fully out of their trouble. It was in harmony with the uniform course of nature that the great water-wheel should turn around when the water pressed upon its flanges, and that then all the machinery of the mill should be put in motion. It always is so. It was also in perfect harmony with the uniform course of events that a sensible man, hearing the noise of the mill when he knew it should be



silent, should suspect some boys of mischief. From the beginning until now boys have always got into mischief when they have had a chance, and generally trouble has followed. So far there was no interruption to the law. That this man should come to see what the boys were about was likewise in harmony with this uniform order of things. Men always do that. Then in every age to turn off the water has been sufficient to stop a mill. Now, here was a special providence, and yet no interruption to the uniformity of the course of nature, and no violation of any of nature's laws.

That the man should turn up on the scene just at the right time is easily accounted for. He must sometime do the work in the field where he chanced to be, or pass along the street to market within hearing of the sounds which caused his alarm. Suppose God purposed to deliver the boys, how easy for Him to set in motion a train of events, all in harmony with the established order, one event waiting upon another, which would result in bringing the man to the place just at the right time.

Now, this actual occurrence in the childhood of the writer has been described with much minuteness of detail, because it furnishes a complete illustration of a special providence without any disturbance of nature's uniformity. One law can easily be made to counteract another. The student sees illustrations of this in the laboratory every day. His own knowledge enables him in his experiments to turn one force against an-



other, and so to realize the results he desires. Why should there be any doubt of God's ability to do the same thing with the whole vast system of nature, and in this way to answer prayers, and to send help to any whom he desires to reach?

6. The Bible is calculated to greatly mislead its readers if He does not so interfere in many cases for the protection and deliverance of His people.

"Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence." How shall He do this? Not by just letting things take their own way, but by intermeddling with them.

Again, "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He maketh the devices of the people of none effect." How, if not by special interference with them according to His own plans?

"The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness: for by strength shall no man prevail" (1 Sam. ii. 6-9). How can this all be done without special interference on behalf of individuals?

"For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the

judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another" (Psalm lxxv. 6, 7). How, without special providences?

The passages that require this interpretation are too numerous to be dwelt upon here. It is so easy for God to take care of the world in this way, and it is just what would be expected from one such as the Bible represents Him to be. When your nurse takes your babe out for an airing, it is both easy and natural that her curiosity should be excited by the plumage of some bird, and so be diverted from the course she was taking, and in this way get out of reach of a horse that is running away. No miracle is necessary to put the bird in her way. A yellow leaf lying upon the walk may draw you away from the danger of being buried by a falling wall. So, what seems a chance meeting with an old friend may determine your whole course in life. We see nothing at the time in little occurrences which in the end prove to be of the most momentous consequence. We may never trace any connection between them and our safety or our prosperity; but there is not a life in which some of the best results may not be connected with what at the time seemed small happenings, of no account. The stories say that Richard Whittington, when fleeing from London, was attracted by the ringing of a bell, and turned back to a life of eminent success and usefulness. Whatever may be true in his case, there have been many Whittingtons in the fact of being turned, by some special circumstance, into the path where they found happiness, and opportunity, and

reward. The gabbling geese saved old Rome. A shower of rain probably decided Waterloo in favor of Wellington.

It may be said that any of these small circumstances could as easily draw a person into the way of danger as out of it. Certainly, and they doubtless would do so if all things were subject to mere chance, and not to an intelligent Ruler; but we are proceeding on the understanding that they are controlled by a wise hand, and are not subject to chance.

Let who will see no special intervention of the hand of God in such occurrences, he is in an unphilosophic attitude who doubts, not he who firmly believes, that the Lord works in this way to guide the lives of men.

7. Do any ask, How about the poverty that is unfed, the misery unhealed, the untimely deaths allowed, that send up, hovering under the dome of the sky, an awful discord of cries, and groans, and sighs from this old grave-scarred and tear-dewed earth? It may be said in reply, that everything in revelation and Providence, so far as yet learned, indicates that it is God's plan that this weary earth shall, for some time to come, remain the nurse of graves and sorrows, and it is not necessary that every tear be dried before we can believe that He does control events among men for their great good.

Nor yet is it necessary that we believe that every occurrence in life is immediately controlled by Him. The text says, "the Lord directeth his steps." But this

is not to be pressed to the extreme of its literal meaning. It is rather a general statement that God has every part of our lives under His eye, and that He interferes whenever it suits His purpose, so as to affect the final result. The truth conveyed in this verse is the same as in the first verse of this chapter, which reads here, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." In that form every commentator has had a difficulty in explaining the meaning, and in reconciling the translation with the original. But the revised version greatly helps us. In this the verse is made to read, "The preparations of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." That conveys about the same meaning as the familiar proverb, "Man proposes, but God disposes." That is the idea, stated in a general way, which the text also contains.

It is not therefore to be understood that God constantly interferes, making each minute detail what it is, for that would destroy human freedom; but that he knows all our steps, and takes hold upon our lives when He will. No doubt, the general course of nature, acting upon man and with him, usually brings about what God requires in him, but sometimes not. Indeed, if our lives were simply left to what we can make out of ourselves in conflict with the general course of things, then the Scripture language, which represents God as His people's director and guide, would be wholly misleading. If these passages have any meaning at all, then in some cases, at least, a strong grip is taken

upon the stern course of events by the mighty hand of the infinite Deity, and air, and sea, and earth, and lower orders of animals, and man himself, are so constrained as to serve His sovereign will, and, on the whole, to push mankind upward to a higher plane.

By these two methods, then—the Holy Spirit acting directly upon the heart, and special providences—God does direct the ways of men. And though the same Spirit leads out every feature of the Divine Providence, yet His influence here is not the same as His direct, guiding influence upon the human heart. The last is His special work with man. These two modes of guidance work hand in hand, and move ever in the same direction, and serve the same ends. What those ends are will be considered in the next discourse.

### III.

#### The Divine Purpose in Guiding Men.

"If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—ROMANS viii. 13, 14.

"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."—GAL. v. 16.

TO what end does God interfere with the lives of men? What reason can be sufficient to bring Him into our path? Does the Holy Spirit, or special Providence, or do both united, give men positive direction, of which they can be fully conscious, concerning everything they can do? Can we, for example, have an intimation by which we will receive undoubted confidence that God is directing us as to whom we shall vote for in an election? Can we be positive that God is instructing us to send a child to one school in preference to another? May we receive from God a certain assurance that He would have us open business in a particular city, and in a certain street of that city; or that we shall not form a partnership with one particular man, but shall make a connection with another?

Now, all this questioning cannot be answered in a breath. Nor can we crowd intelligently all that bears upon this subject into one short discourse. Let the reader, therefore, be warned not to be impatient if his expectations are not fully realized in the next few pages. If all that has dimly floated in his mind on this subject is not fully stated, or if every idea he has formed relating to this question does not here walk out before him, let him not therefore throw down the book with the stamp of his withering condemnation upon it.

The interests of truth are never advanced by mixing up ideas with each other. But if we will patiently fix one whole thought clearly in our mind, then we are prepared to grasp another thought intimately related to the former, and so advance to a grand structure of clearly-defined truth upon any subject; and when once we reach it in this way we never lose it. But mixed and confused notions do not serve us efficiently while we have them, and they do not retain the same color even a day at a time. Let us follow the wiser plan now, and perhaps when we clearly apprehend the answer given just here, we, in advancing farther in our study, will find all that we can covet to read.

At present, then, we are to study what is the great general purpose under God's guiding hand when He breaks in upon our lives? We can afterwards examine how far that purpose may reach, or must reach, in all directions.

I. We will begin with the active, direct influence of the Holy Spirit on the heart as our Guide.

1. What the Scriptures unequivocally teach is, that the Spirit labors with men to draw them away from all sin, and to prompt them in the pursuit of all goodness. He influences us in every movement, and word, and thought, that has any relation to virtue or vice, to truth or falsehood, to righteousness or guilt. More than this we cannot know from the proper study of the written Word. According to what it teaches, the guidance of the Spirit is given to us to promote holiness of character, and that is the supreme purpose of His mission.

Let us now turn to a patient examination of the message of the Word on this subject. Let us for the moment think of ourselves as carried back between two and three hundred years, when Bibles were scarce, and the privilege of studying them had only for a short time been added to the liberties of the English people. Then a rare copy of the Bible was chained to the reading desk in the church, and the historian of the time gravely tells us that the people assembled daily, as their work allowed, and listened attentively through the fast moving hours, while any person with a clear voice and good understanding read from the Holy Book. Under these circumstances, let us suppose that one day the gathered multitude heard the reader clearly enunciate the words of one of the passages at the beginning of this discourse: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Now,



they listened in those days, not as in a formal religious service, but to be instructed in the truth. It would therefore be perfectly natural for any listener, struck with the high privilege of being a son of God set forth in this passage, and desirous of knowing if he had any right to claim that privilege, to ask what being led by the Spirit means? Does that guidance relate to every act of life?

Then the reader, being competent to answer such an enquirer wisely, would propose to read further what the Word itself says upon the subject. He might turn to 1 John iii. 10, where he would read as follows: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." There would be room here for a natural inference. The sons of God are made known by doing righteousness. But if one is led by the Spirit, that fact also proves that he is the son of God. It is therefore a reasonable conclusion, that being led by the Spirit is simply doing righteousness. In those days of simple, rugged common-sense, people would be satisfied with that conclusion. They would turn away feeling that if they so heed the impressions received upon their hearts from the Spirit of God as to keep in the way of righteousness, they will fill the required qualification of the sons of God; and then they would easily come to think that the Spirit leads men at all only to keep them in this way, and to save them from sin. This was just the impression Wesley got from his study of the Word

at a much later day. In his notes on the New Testament, when he comes to this passage, he puts the text and his own comment upon it in the following form : "As many as are led by the Spirit of God (in the ways of righteousness), they are the sons of God."

When, then, I have said that the Spirit's guidance is only to keep us from sin and devoted to righteousness, I say what the Apostle John taught, and what Wesley also clearly expressed in his published works.

2. But, carrying out our fancy of a full church listening to the reading of the Word, some hearer would probably ask for something more than this single passage from John. Is there not in the Bible some definite teaching about the work the Spirit does in men? If there is, then we may reasonably expect to find the mind of the Lord on the whole subject in such passages. With this pointer, the reader would naturally turn to the Book of the Acts, in the second chapter, where we have the record of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, in fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh." In this chapter we have an account of the whole company of the disciples gathered together, and the sound as of a rushing wind, and the appearance of cloven tongues, like fire, and the disciples being filled with the Holy Ghost, and speaking with other tongues. Then follows Peter's sermon, declaring that Joel's prophecy was fulfilled on that day, and setting forth the substance of the Gospel; and then the record that they, who heard Peter were pricked in their heart,

and asked, "What shall we do?" They were told to repent, and to be baptized for the remission of sins, and that they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Now, this narrative indicates nothing further than that the Spirit's work in men is to turn them from sin to holiness.

3. Pressed for what the Word might teach further on this subject of the Spirit's guidance, the reader might turn to Galatians v. 22, 23. Here he reads, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Now, here are mentioned, in connection with each other, the effects which the Holy Spirit is expected to produce in the human heart, but there is no hint of anything except what pertains to separation from sin, and the development of righteous deeds on righteous principles. He will bring love into the heart. Sin has separated men from each other, and it has cut in between all men and God. But love is the power which unites, and the Spirit opens its way in the hearts of men, and teaches them first to love God, and then to love each other. Then He brings in "joy." Any person experiences a sense of joyous approval when he casts off sin, and also when he follows goodness willingly. In fact, all the fruits of the Spirit mentioned in this list relate to separation from sin and growth in righteousness.

4. Let the reader now turn back in this same fifth chapter of Galatians, to verses 17 and 18. He reads, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit

against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law." Now, the clear meaning of this scripture is that the purpose of the Spirit is to drive desires of the flesh out of their stronghold, and to bring the spiritual part of man's nature up into the ascendancy over him in all things. If we are led by the Spirit, we are not under the law. If that means anything, it means that so long as we are led by the Spirit we not only do not transgress the law, but we have clearer insight than this obedience requires, and do not do anything that is offensive to God, though not definitely spoken against in the written law. But sin is the only thing in the universe which offends God. The Spirit's guidance, then, has for its purpose the keeping us out of sin, and the turning us away from the love of it and from doing it.

5. But even yet further might be pressed this question of the purpose of the Spirit in guiding men. Then the reader, seeking for something more on the subject, might turn to John xvi. 8-15: "And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak

of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you."

Now, this is a discourse in which Jesus foretold to His disciples just what the work of the Spirit would be when He should come. Four distinct works are assigned to Him: (1) He will "reprove." (2) He will "guide." (3) He will "show things to come." (4) He will "glorify the Son" by "receiving of Mine" and "showing it to the disciples."

Now, two expressions in the thirteenth verse seem to contain something more than we have yet found pertaining to His special work: "He will guide you into all truth," and "He will show you things to come." Take the first of these. Is it to be understood as meaning that the Spirit will lead men into universal truth?—science, and art, and history? If it receives so broad a meaning, then it could never be applied to individuals, because no man ever was instructed by the Spirit—or in any other way—into universal truth. Not one of the apostles ever knew that oxygen could be procured from potassium chlorate. That the world was round, and that there was any such thing as this vast American continent, never entered into the imaginings, much less into the certain knowledge, of the people who gave themselves up most fully to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for

more than a thousand years after Jesus spoke these words. Universal knowledge of truth has never been given to any one in any age, nor yet has the race attained to it. It would only be in a sort of limited way that it could be said that the Spirit was guiding the human race into all truth through the course of the ages. If that were the meaning to be conveyed, there would be no propriety in using such a form of words as that referred to above.

But if what this passage promises is to be an individual benefit, then the truth referred to must have some limitation. A reasonable explanation of this expression is to be found by taking it in connection with another, viz., John xiv. 26. This reads: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Now, consider such words in connection with the facts involved. The New Testament was not then a written word. The teachings of Christ had no form save as they were retained in the memories of those who heard Him; but they were yet to be written out for the instruction of all mankind. Now, memory alone could not be depended upon to reproduce these words of Jesus with infallible correctness. It is always a more or less treacherous servant, even when reporting matters of little volume and of recent date. But the substance of what Jesus taught was sufficient to fill a book of considerable size, and it had been given at different

places and times, through a period extending over about three years, and not a note had been written down of the whole at the time when He died. What is more reasonable, as an interpretation of these passages, than that they were a message of encouragement to the apostles in writing out what Jesus wished all the world to know? The Spirit would give them, while engaged in this work, such aid, by inspiration, as would render their memory of what had occurred and of what He had said absolutely correct. They would not be allowed to fall into errors which would be misleading to those who, in after-time, should read what they were to write. Thus should they be guided into all truth.

But in addition to what Jesus had taught in person, there was much to be revealed. The apostles were assured that in writing even more than the words of Jesus, and the events of His life, they should be led into a knowledge of the truth. They would not be left to their own reasonings and imaginings, but the Spirit would give them by inspiration what they should teach, so that their word would be a safe guide in all things pertaining to spiritual life and eternal salvation, to all the peoples who in the coming time should fill this crowded earth. It was a special promise to the apostles, and was fulfilled to them when they were writing the gospels and their epistles. Then they realized the meaning of the promise, "He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you."

Here is an intelligent explanation of these words,



"He will guide you into all truth." They are a promise to the apostles of the gift of inspiration in writing the Word.

Language must be admitted to have some relation to the meaning it is designed to convey, especially when it is found in the Bible. But to take up this expression, and from it to derive the notion that the Holy Spirit will teach us all about the minute details of our daily life, is to use language without any relation to the meaning of the words used. For what connection is there between the being guided into a knowledge of truth, and my purchase of a town lot, or opening a factory for the manufacture of shoes, for example, or choosing a school to which to send my children? The language about guiding into all truth can have no kind of application to such transactions.

We are, no doubt, justified in claiming from it that the Spirit will aid us in reaching the real meaning of what has been written for our instruction; but not without earnest study. We are to know the truth "by comparing spiritual things with spiritual." The Spirit is in no case an indulgence for idleness or ignorance. He will not enable ignorance and presumption to reach the truth as correctly as industry and honest study, the same as is necessary to understand any other work.

6. And now let us examine into the meaning of the other expression in the 16th chapter and 13th verse of John. It says, "He will show you things to come." The careless reader will catch upon this in confidence,



and claim that the Spirit will open up the future of any person's life who will seek such knowledge in anticipation, in dependence upon God. He will say that under this promise he may claim that he will be enabled to see through all the perplexities and difficulties that grow out of his temporal relations in life.

The best answer to this pretence is the fact that such a revelation from the Spirit concerning his temporal future has not been given to any man, not even the most devout and holy who ever lived in any age of the world. The holiest man walks in as much uncertainty concerning his temporal affairs in the future as the sinner does, save and except that God has made to him certain definite promises of provision which cannot fail. Of these more will be said at a more advanced stage of this enquiry. But what holy man knew before the last election how it would turn, any more than the politicians, who were so much surprised by the event? What holy man knows anything beforehand about the proportions his business will assume in the next year, except as the result of a reasonable calculation, based upon his past experience?

But if these words will not admit of this explanation, what do they mean? They are explained by the words of Paul, written in 1 Corinthians ii. 7-14: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is

written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Now, some things are plain from this passage. The things which the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, are the same things which "God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit." They are the things which are "freely given to us of God." Among them, certainly, are the regeneration of our natures, the sense of sins forgiven, the hope of immortality, the joy of the Lord, which is to be the believer's heaven, and which is now his strength, a certain confidence that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and the future judgment. All these were beyond the discernment of the wisest among men until the revelation by the Spirit of God brought them to light. Some of them enter into the

believer's experience in this present life, but the rest lie entirely beyond the grave. They might well be spoken of as things to come in the discourse addressed by Jesus to His disciples. They are chiefly things to come to the Church even unto this day ; yet the saints are brought into perfect confidence of their reality, as if they were already seen. No body of men, worthy in any way of the name of a Church, has failed to believe and teach them all, though with some variety in the expressions used. Here, then, are the "things to come" which the promise declares will be shown unto us by the Spirit.

7. We have now fully examined those passages wherein Jesus most explicitly taught His disciples what the distinct work of the Spirit would be, with the result that we find an assurance only that He will, if we will follow His leading, keep us free from sin, and strengthen us for the performance of all good deeds.

Perhaps a word is necessary on 1 Corinthians ii. 15 : "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." A passion to prove a point would lead a person to claim that these words teach that the Spirit gives him who is led by His influence an infallible judgment in all things, both temporal and spiritual. In the revised version the word is "examineth" all things, and the meaning is very clear. Worldly men think of, and care for, and enquire into, only the things which pertain to this present world. Their thoughts do not rise so high as God and immortality. But the spiritual

man is more interested in those things which relate to the future life and a higher world than he is in the things of the present. He examines and inquires into them.

8. We may follow this subject into as many chapters and books of the Bible as time will admit of, but we will not find anything positively promising that the Spirit will lead us, except in giving us a clear discernment between sin and holiness, and the power to cleave to the latter with full purpose of heart, and with perfect success in our effort to attain to it, and to maintain it without reproach. It is not for us to assert or imply that He never affects us at all for lower ends. We do not find any promise of it in the Word. But it is not too much to say that the Spirit will make any who will cheerfully follow Him perfect in the discernment of sin, and will enable them with perfect ability to avoid doing it or loving it. To do this is the grand purpose of His mission in this world. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." For this end Jesus came, and the Spirit is carrying on the same grand design. Jesus and the Bible and the Spirit work under the same all-controlling purpose. What is the Bible? A message from God to teach men how to get to heaven, and how to become fit and worthy to enter there. It aims at no more than this. Jesus made it no part of the work of His mission to directly advance the temporal interests of His people, but His teaching all pointed in quite the contrary direction,

His kingdom, as He declared, not being of this world. He did not try to regulate the civil wrongs of the time. There were abuses enough then, as now, but He used no influence against them, except by giving the world a leaven which, through the course of the ages, would work a remedy. In the same manner He taught general principles which, if observed, would improve His people's worldly condition. So, neither does the Word make the least attempt to advance science, except the science of a holy life. It does not contribute one syllable toward a better knowledge of the laws of trade and political economy, or to enable men to manufacture things greatly needed for their comfort and happiness. A thoughtful, pious lady once said, in the course of a conversation along this line, in which her own wishes had been somewhat disappointed, "I know the Bible is not a cookery book." And so it is not a merchant's or a manufacturer's manual.

A person may be a perfect Christian, and yet go on for years making the most tremendous blunders in his business and in domestic economy, and the Bible will never instruct him, except as may be implied in certain general principles, how to escape from his errors, though they impoverish him. As Christ left His friends among the poor, so will the Bible leave its most careful readers, and so will the Spirit leave those who are most devoutly led by Him into all holiness of life, if they pay no attention to the laws which give success in business, or if they have not intelligence to observe and understand them. The Spirit will

supply knowledge of practical affairs which can only be attained by experience, and can only be practised by intelligence and care.

It is possible for men to desire the Holy Spirit that He may serve their selfishness, by giving them a sort of infallibility in the knowledge of worldly uncertainties, but this cannot occur if we fully recognize that His mission is to promote holiness alone.

As will appear from further study of the subject, there will be abundant room for the Spirit's active influence in what belongs to this world's life. But of this more in a future discourse.

#### IV.

### *The Great Purpose of Divine Providence.*

"Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: I flee unto Thee to hide me. Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God: Thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." — PSALM cxliii. 9, 10.

THE Psalmist, in offering this prayer, evidently believed that God cared for him as an individual. There was a strong desire for personal deliverance from enemies in constant pursuit of him, and a feeling that his own skill and strength were not sufficient for his conflict, and therefore he invoked the Divine aid. God could easily smite his foes, and they would melt away.

But his thought did not stop there. He rose into the spiritual, and at once took hold upon the higher good as the leading thought of his prayer: "Teach me Thy way," "Lead me into the land of uprightness." One blow from the hand of Providence would disperse the foes who crowded around him. But in opening the way of escape, this same providence was expected to look to a higher end as its supreme object. Its great and constant purpose must be the

doing of the will of God by the individual. Upright-ness in the purposes of the heart and in the deeds of the daily life is the end toward which all its movements tend. "Lead me into the land of uprightness."

2. But while this is fully set before us as the high end of all Providential interference in human affairs, it would be more than the truth to say that Providence never guides men with respect to worldly ends. Of this, and how God—by the Spirit and by providence—comes into our worldly life, more will be said as we advance in this study; but it does seem important that we recognize, in what the Bible teaches, that the aim of both providence and grace is to bring mankind out of sin—out of worldliness—into the paths of righteousness and the clear light of heaven. Take such passages as the following:—

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go."—Psa. xxxii. 8.

"Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will He teach sinners in the way. The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way."—Psa. xxv. 8, 9.

"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."—Jer. x. 23.

In reading the Scriptures, a little careful attention will discover that the words "way" and "path" are often used with a special meaning. There is, for example, the "way of evil" and the "false way."



Such expressions are certainly used to describe a life of sin. In opposition to this meaning we have "the way of the just," "the way of righteousness," "the way of life," "the way of the righteous," and "Thy way," which certainly means the Lord's own way. In the same manner the word "path" is used. There are the "paths of all that forget God," and the "path of life"; the "path of the just," the "path of uprightness," and "Thy paths," meaning the Lord's paths.

Now, all such expressions indicate a clear distinction between two different ways or paths. The one is all good, the other is all evil. In the light of this distinction read the passages I have quoted about His teaching us the way, and others of similar import which abound in the Old Testament, and especially in the Psalms, and the thought will take strong possession of the mind that God's great care for men is that they may be led into the path of the just. He gives to them His solemn pledge that if they will submit to His guidance He will keep them in the right one of these two ways, which are set before all men alike. When "the way" is spoken of it means the way of righteousness. This is plain from the words quoted above: "Therefore will He teach sinners in the way." If He says, "the meek will He teach His way," it is a positive assurance that those who are submissive and willing to learn of Him will be kept out of the way of evil, and enabled to walk constantly in obedience to the Divine commandments. When He promises "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which

thou shalt go," the idea is that there are two ways before every one, and that God will instruct into which of these two His people shall walk. They will be constantly so watched over and aided, and influenced both from within and without, that they will be kept in the right one of the two paths which stretch out before all. Neither ignorance, nor weakness, nor temptation, nor the allurements of the world, shall at any time be sufficient to cause them to fall into the way of evil men. This is what is meant by our way being chosen and directed by the Lord.

3. Again let the reader be assured that no effort is being made to destroy his comfort in the confidence that God aids him in his worldly affairs. As already promised, we shall come to consider that point fully when we are farther on in this work. But it is necessary in the interests of holiness, as well as to a proper exposition of truths which shine on almost every page of the Bible, that we come to recognize and feel, and be filled with the conviction, until conformity to the Divine will becomes almost a passion in us, that God's supreme thought for men is that they may be saved wholly from sin and be made worthy the kingdom of God. The history of the ages that are gone, the wounds that have not been healed, the sorrows that have been allowed to weep through the night and the day, suffering poverty and lingering pain—in short, the whole sad and weeping story of human life—can only be understood from the position that with God all considerations of human comfort, or consequence,

or progress, are subordinate to the subjugation of sin in the soul. And as our worldly position, the measure of pleasure or ease we may enjoy, is beneath His thought, when compared to this one all-comprehending object, so ought all other considerations to be beneath our thought in the same comparison.

4. But is there not comfort enough for the saint in this assurance that God's unslumbering providence and enabling grace will make a specialty of his case, and guard the rights in the kingdom of heaven which he has through the merits and mercy of Christ, so that he shall lose none of them by the combinations of his spiritual foes? This is sufficient alone to swell his heart with constant song. Yet there are many assurances given in the Word, in forms as strong as language will carry, that he shall ever be the object of such loving care.

In the Old Testament we come upon the passage at the beginning of this discourse. Then we have—

Psalm xxxvii. 24: "Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand."

Psalm cxlv. 14: "The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down."

John x. 27: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."

Romans viii. 38, 39: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

These are characteristic promises. They and others of similar import are sometimes explained so as to maintain the doctrine of final perseverance, and they do maintain it assuredly, but subject to just one condition, and that is, that the person concerned, by watchfulness and prayer, keep himself constantly in the Lord's hands, by what is virtually an ever-repeated act of consecration. These passages assert in the strongest manner the believer's perfect safety so long as he keeps himself in God's hands. They do not mean that he will always do what is absolutely right, or even what is best for this world or the next. He will be mistaken and misjudged; he may be misled and betrayed into a thousand errors, and grieved again and again by his own imperfections; but committing himself wholly to the Lord, he will not be allowed to go astray so as to forfeit his title to heaven. The errors into which he may fall will not separate between him and God, because he does not willingly offend in anything. He will not be allowed to fall in the way of temptations which he is not strong enough to overcome. He will never turn aside willingly from the path of duty, nor continuously neglect what God requires of him. All this the saint is positively assured of under the Divine care and guidance so long as he

makes himself sure that he commits himself fully unto the Lord, because God will never abandon any who do not of their own set purpose abandon Him. There is no danger of using too strong language on this point. Committed fully to God, he is as sure that he will not be allowed to fall into any way that would forfeit the Divine favor, and that he will be brought safely into heaven at last, as he can be that God's promise will never fail, or that Christ is already in heaven.

5. This seems to be the proper connection in which to enlarge the scope of God's guidance and care, so as to include not only that the saint will himself be kept blameless in his integrity and assuredly saved in heaven at last, but, in addition, that he will not be the cause of others falling into any offence and missing their way, but that he will be made an instrument helpful to them in the ways of righteousness so far as they will. His profession and life will be made in the highest possible degree fruitful in keeping the greatest possible number from committing sin and loving it, and in aiding them in all possible ways in the attainment of goodness. For a person to be kept true and pure himself necessarily includes his becoming an occasion, not of sin and uncleanness, but of truth, and virtue, and holiness, to all others who may come under the influence of his life.

All this is clearly taught in many of the sacred writings. Take, for example,—

Galatians v. 22, 23 : "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

At least seven of these gifts—that is, all of them except joy and faith, and possibly in some measure even these—concern the moral and spiritual well-being of others, as well as that of the person in whose heart they abound. There is “love.” This certainly extends one’s arms to take all the human into his embrace, as well as reaching up to God. “Peace” describes an attitude of friendliness and forgiveness toward every man. “Longsuffering” means that no impatience in us at the errors or foibles, and even the sins of others, shall make it more difficult than it otherwise would be for them to find and keep the way of holiness. “Gentleness” indicates the winning spirit that bends in helpful sympathy towards any who are seeking to escape from the paths of sin and to reach the highway of holiness. “Goodness” is the Christlike example which flashes out its light upon the path of the weak and erring at our side; and it is also the sweet spirit of perfect purity by which our acts should be informed. “Meekness” is the absence of all self-seeking in the sight of men; as well as the sense of perfect dependence upon God. “Temperance” is complete self-control, not only in eating and drinking, but in speech and movement, and in everything that can affect ourselves or others.

The only conclusion we can reach is that the Spirit will work in our hearts the capacity for helpfulness to others. As many as are led by the Spirit will not only walk themselves in the way of righteousness, but they will be enabled to aid others in the attainment of all moral and spiritual ends.

6. In the last sermon an examination of what the New Testament teaches concerning the offices of the Holy Spirit led to the conclusion that His supreme work is to save men out of sin and into heaven.

But Providence and the Spirit are united in one aim so far as their guiding influence is concerned. What one seeks is also the end aimed at by the other. The Providence which watches over and blesses our lives is first and ever seeking to guide and keep our feet in the paths of holiness and truth. By every means God's grand purpose is to lift men to eternal life. With this end in view, special providences walk abroad seeking whom they may aid. Their strong arms are extended around the weak. With eyes that never close with sleep they watch over the tempted, providing open doors of escape, prompting men through their weaknesses even, warning and alarming them by their partial falls, and from dangerous traps into which they had well nigh fallen, causing them to hurry upon their high errands with diligent and willing feet.

Recall how it was with the chosen people in all their wanderings. There is no other such example of a God-preserved and heaven-guided people. Whether in escaping out of the land of bondage, or crossing the sea, or pitching their tents in the wilderness, or finding their adequate supplies of food, or drinking of sweet waters in the desert, all the way through one end was kept in view. God's highest and best thought for them was that they might come safely into their promised inheritance. The hardships of their weary



years in the wilderness were light indeed in comparison with their longer years of degrading bondage in Egypt; but lighter still in anticipation of the joyful possession of the promised land at last. Many a blessing came by the way which only the hand of God could have dropped down upon them; yet the measure of ease and comfort and pleasure which they should experience during their long wanderings was, to His infinite thought, as nothing in contrast with their ultimately coming worthily into the final rest.

Does not this indicate to us what the great purpose of Divine Providence is in influencing us in our paths through life? Is not a bright ray of comfort flashed out upon us all from this reflection? If any are enriched, it is for the one purpose; or if any are poor, it is to work out the same grand end. And as, in the natural world, storm and drought obey His will, and serve His grand and high designs, so, in the spiritual world, the passages in life that bend us, the woe of tears and blood, affliction and disappointment, are all, in His hand, either directed from the first or overruled at last so as to aid this one highest purpose; and then, after all else, death comes in and closes the door upon the grand and finished design.

The next step in our study will aim to discover how, with this higher purpose ever before Him, God's strong hand may take hold upon our lives and influence us in our temporal concerns, and aid us in things of a purely worldly nature.



## V.

### Our Guide in Temporal Things.

"And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."  
—ISAIAH lviii. 11.

**T**HIS language clearly indicates that the hand of God, as our guide, crosses over the border-line into worldly prosperity. There is much of a temporal nature which, according to this text, He holds under His own special direction.

How can this be consistent with the views already developed, that, as our guide, His supreme interest is in our deliverance from sin and our admission to glory? Very easily.

The point already reached is, that under His guidance, if we will, we are sure of being saved from sin, both from loving it and from doing it.

I. We have now first to enquire how, under this leading aim, His guiding hand can take hold upon temporal things?

1. Why, in order to realize spiritual results, it is essential that a general direction be taken by Him of

all the affairs of our life. This will be evident on a little reflection as to what holiness really is. It is not something distinct from all that enters into life, standing near us, or even surrounding us like a house, and which we may call our own, but not a part of us; but holiness is rather our whole life. It is the manner of our connection with everything in the world outside of ourselves, with the same things with which all other people are connected, though they make no pretence to religion at all.

It may be said, truly enough, that holiness is simply a condition of the heart. But such a condition of heart cannot exist without affecting our relation to the outside world, and we are not so much interested in what a man may declare the state of his heart to be, as we are in the effect which that alleged condition of his heart has upon his outward conduct. Whatever may be revealed in the light of the day of judgment as to the purpose and intention of any person's heart, practical holiness is the only form of holiness that we can know anything about in this world. And practical holiness can be manifested only by the manner in which we bear ourselves in relation to the duties of every day and hour of life, not only when engaged in prayers, but in such acts as every man also performs, though he be ever so selfish and worldly. Practical holiness is the temper manifested by us in the shop, and office, and street, and kitchen, and parlor; in an election contest as well as in a prayer-meeting.

There is no act or work in any of these relations of

which there is not some part which belongs to holiness, and then beneath that, or lying around it, is an element which is not essential to make the act holy in the sight of God. At best we can only illustrate this in a clumsy way, because some things cannot be separated from others by clear and distinct lines. It is difficult, for example, to draw a clear line of definition between the part of an act which concerns our spiritual life, and that part of it which does not touch the holiness of our character. Still, we may venture to suggest the indefinable line.

Take, as an example, the act of buying a house. A part of that act reveals the holiness, or the reverse, of the purchaser's character. If he is subject to the Divine guidance, keeping him in the path of righteousness, then in his purchase he will show himself as desirous of securing to the second party in the bargain all that he has a just right to, as he is to secure his own rights. That is simple honesty. Again, his spiritual susceptibility may be touched and quickened into action in that act of purchase by considerations of his moral welfare, and that of his family, when dwelling in that house. What conveniences does it command for religious instruction? What dangers to himself and family by exposure to more than common temptations? All of this, at least, and perhaps much more which we cannot discern, in the act, affects the holiness of his character; and therefore, to this extent, at least, we can make no mistake in saying that in buying a house a man is subject to the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit and Divine Providence.

But there are many other things in which we are interested in making such a purchase. The number of rooms, their situation in relation to each other, the arrangement of windows and doors, the cellar and closets, are all of some consequence to us. Have we paid more for it than would have purchased another house with equal advantages? These are particulars which, so far as we can discern, lie beneath the plane of our spiritual life. In such particulars we have no word of promise to justify our saying that God will certainly guide us. But we cannot, of course, be absolutely certain that even these minor particulars do not in some way affect our character for sin or holiness. If they do, He will guide us in them. But, however we may answer this question, it is clear from what has been said, that if God so guides us as to keep us from sin, we shall be influenced by Him in the apparently worldly act of purchasing a dwelling.

Let this one example stand for all. As in buying a house, so in all other acts which we regard as lying within the plane of temporal affairs. We cannot positively divide between the part which is essential to holiness, and the remainder, which may lie wholly beneath it. Upon a little reflection it will appear that everything that is worth entering into the life of a rational creature at all, must on its higher level have some effect upon himself or others, in respect of sin and holiness. Anyone who has entered upon the Christian profession with any heart for its aims and objects, can have no interest in bringing within the

scope of his plans, and efforts, and experiences, anything whatever which does not in some way affect the holiness of his own living, or of some other whom he may influence. He will cast everything of this kind out of his door, and out of his heart, as far beneath the high aim he has set before him. To linger about this point, and to contend that the promises of the holy Word do include the guidance of men in what even a saint cannot in any way connect with his religion, indicates a spirit of pure worldliness, and not a mind searching after the higher way of perfect devotion to God.

It follows, therefore, that there is abundant room for the guiding hand of our all-wise Father to crowd into our temporal affairs. If the Holy Spirit and Providence are engaged to keep those who want to be kept from committing sin and losing heaven, they must, in some manner and degree, direct and guide them when performing the same duties for the home, and nation, and school, as every man attends to though he does not pretend to be a Christian at all.

2. There is yet another door in the teaching of the Bible through which the hand of God may enter into our worldly concerns. He has given to His people a solemn pledge that below a certain line of worldly comforts and conveniences they shall not fall. Their bread shall be given them, their waters shall be sure. From youth to age the righteous have not been seen forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He that tilleth his land, that is, the man who is diligent and faithful

in attention to his regular business, shall be satisfied with bread.

Add to these promises that contained in the text, indicating plenty, and fulness, and even wealth, as the portion appointed by God to those who are faithful in obeying His commandments.

Now, it is not possible that God can keep His word in respect to this supply of temporal wants without, to some extent, controlling the worldly affairs of His people.

There is also the fact, proven in experience, that generally He gives better than He promises. Of all the crowding multitudes of His vast, uncounted family, in all the ages of the past until now, few indeed, in respect of worldly comforts and conveniences, have fallen to the bare level below which He has bound Himself that none shall go. He has promised bread, but He gives butter, and tea, and sugar. He has promised shelter, but He gives a number of rooms, with carpets on the floor.

Now, the necessity of making this worldly provision, which He has promised to His people, will alone secure to the saints the guiding care of the great Father of all, to such an extent that in matters of a purely worldly nature, which have no connection with a holy life, if indeed this can be possible of anything that crowds into life, they will be sure of being kept from drifting into utter emptiness and ruin.

On this basis we may assert two things very positively :

1. First, we are assured of *general* direction in all our affairs. Perhaps this alone will be sufficient to secure to His people all the temporal good which God has promised to them. Indeed, some will interpret all these promises in a broad and comprehensive way, which finds in them only a general declaration that the order of nature, and the course of events in human life, are necessarily, and without any interference from the Divine hand, altogether in favor of the righteous. Temperance, industry and economy, unselfishness, kindness and charity, all which belong essentially to the character of good men, are calculated, in the regular course of things, without any special interference, to pour into the bosom of the godly, as from an affluent hand, abundant stores of earthly comforts. As a natural result of their piety, righteous men and their seed are sure of receiving enough.

Even such an interpretation as this, of these words of promise, abounds in comfort to the heart of the faithful; but this general view is hardly sufficient to fill up the meaning of the language used. The words convey the idea that the heart of God is set upon him who loves Him, to bless and comfort, and even to enrich, in some degree, for this world, as well as for the abounding glories of the next.

Thus far we have fixed two points. First, that the Divine guidance must come into worldly concerns, because we have no practical holiness except as our lives take hold upon the activities of this world. Therefore, if we are so guided as to be saved from sin,



and made sure of heaven, this guidance must affect us in the common transactions and duties of every day.

The second point is, that it would be impossible for God to keep His promise to His people, that their bread shall be given, if He did not keep a watchful eye upon their worldly affairs.

From these two points we deduce the fact that in a general way the guiding hand of God comes into our temporal concerns.

2. We may go one step farther, and assert that we are sure of His special interference in our affairs whenever He deems it necessary to take hold of them.

Many words in this holy Bible can have no adequate explanation without the admission that God takes care of men as individuals. In our second discourse, in speaking of special providences, it was made plain that God can, without any violence to the system of nature, take hold of any man's affairs, and lead him out of dangers and difficulties, and give him wealth, or leave him to be satisfied with simple enough.

The first point in this study was, that God knows, even to the minutest details, every man's life, and that He cares for every one with all of a father's love. This contains in it an assurance that, whenever in His wisdom it is needful to do so, He will interfere in the interest of any individual.

Such an assurance embodies all the comfort that any human heart can need or crave.

II. Let us now make our thought to face in another direction. This guiding care includes so much, we are



constrained to ask, Does it include everything? Does it extend to the minutest details of life? Does it raise men above the need of any other guiding influence?

To such questions only one answer can reasonably be given. The Spirit will be present with us in everything, as a guide to keep us from sinning. This must sensibly affect all our temporal relations, and the results that grow out of them. But we cannot claim direct, conscious guidance, with reference to worldly ends, in everything we do. There is nothing definitely specified in the revealed Word, nor yet anything in the experiences of the best people who ever lived, to justify us in expecting that God's care will raise us above the necessity of depending upon our own faculties. We are sure of general guidance in temporal things, with special interference when God wills it. Of this it may be said—

1. It is consistent with all the promises of the Bible concerning guidance.

It is true it is said that "He will direct our paths," that He will "instruct us and teach us in the way which we shall go"; and many other words are equally strong.

But take these passages as we understand words in their common use. A road, a path, a way, convey the idea of a long course of acts or movements under the control of one principle. As already seen, the Bible teaches us of two ways, one of sin and one of holiness. Here is the idea of a long succession of acts, choices, decisions, plans, all subject either to the one controlling

principle which makes human character noble and pure, or to just the opposite principle. So, in our conversation, when we speak of teaching a person the way, for example, to a distant city, we only understand that he will receive information of leading points as to railway stations, changes from one train to another, steamboats, stages, or anything of a similar nature which may be involved. When the man, under such guidance, reaches the desired place, he says that he was correctly guided there, though nothing was done but in a general manner to designate the path by which he reached it. Such guidance is very different from walking at his side, telling him when to stop, and when to turn; where there is a bad place on which he must not put his foot, and to what particular house he must go for food and rest; where to find a seat, and to whom he may speak upon his journey.

Now, if we may interpret the language of the Bible by the common rules in the use of which we are in the habit of getting the meaning of words, then we will be taught that God will instruct us in those general principles which control a worthy life, and that He will influence central events which gather other events around them, and give them their character, rather than that He will instruct us in every separate act we may do, and in every word we may speak. This is the manner of His guidance in all worldly things; and when more than this is promised, it relates to the Spirit's personal presence, saving us from sin and leading us in the way of

righteousness, or it is a special interference to meet some crying necessity.

2. Moreover, this general direction is in perfect harmony with God's paternal relation to us.

Nothing in the word is more full of sweetness and comfort than the fact that God reveals Himself to us as our Father; but so far as the teaching of analogy has any authority, this paternal relation indicates, as a rule, only a general guidance of worldly estates and conditions. A father's object in guiding his child is to develop the highest efficiency on the part of the child in self-directed action. Take the case of a little girl about to begin attendance at school. She knows something of the city already. Her father gets her books, teaches her how to arrange them in her bag, tells her what streets she is to take, at what corners to turn, and when to start so as to reach the schoolhouse in time. Then she goes out alone and makes her way according to the general directions. She passes from one side of the street to the other, or even goes out of her way around a square to avoid a horse, or dog, or group of men. So long as she reaches the school in time, both she and her father consider that she has followed his general directions. She is not taught, when meeting with any unexpected obstacle, to run home to her father and ask him to carry her, but rather to depend upon her own resources in avoiding it. So, day after day throughout the year, she goes back and forth, her wisdom constantly increasing with her varied experiences, her judgment daily ripening

with the necessity of depending upon it. Thus any father directs the paths of his child, but not the separate movements of life. He teaches the way in which the child shall go, but does not himself know, because he does not deem it worth while to enquire into, the minute details of that way.

3. This mode of guidance is also consistent with the examples in Scripture which illustrate God's dealings with men.

After this plan the chosen people of God were guided in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud and of fire went before them, and clearly indicated when and where they were to rest, and when and whither they were to move. But in this way they only received direction as to the general course they were to take. No stretch of fancy is required to understand that sometimes, when a large rock lifted itself up in their path, or other unevenness obstructed their way, without any further intimation than they received from their own common sense, they went around the obstruction, for the time turning aside, and perhaps, in appearance, going away from the guiding pillar; but even then they were following its fiery light, because in the end they always came up on the spot above which it appeared. Thus God directed their way. He marked out the course they were to take, but they depended upon themselves in determining how they should pass the minute portions of the way. The one thing made certain by the Lord's guidance was, that they should go where He desired them to go, and

encamp when and where He appointed. So long as they did this they did not disregard His sovereign will, nor scorn the direction of His guiding hand.

In these suitable illustrations we see a fair indication of the extent to which God enters into and controls our own lives. Anything more than this general direction in worldly things, as a constant influence, we cannot know from anything taught in the Word, nor from what we can discern in our own experience. We are not certain of the fact when special interpositions come.

4. This view of Divine guidance explains the fact of men being often in the dark. In temporal things we are not sure when we are guided by God.

Indeed, our difficulty in the study of this whole subject centres largely in the fact that, except in relation to sin and holiness, we cannot be certain when we are specially guided by God, and when not. When the case involves, clearly, a decision between guilt and innocence, in choosing the good and eschewing the evil we know that God is leading us, because the human heart can cleave unto righteousness only as it is enabled by Him; but as soon as we leave decisions of this kind how can we be certain? We may be guided by Him when we do not know it, or suspect it; and on the other hand, we may think we are led out by impressions received directly from Him, when really we are only following our own impulses. How are we to discern? Should it be a case of the making of some purchase, it is probable that we would think ourselves

guided from on high in the act if the article purchased should prove suitable to our necessities, or if the result of our bargain should be a reasonable increase to our gain; but yet perplexity might arise on either of these points. If another, by investing the same sum, should get something better adapted to the necessity, or should realize greater gain from the investment, we could scarcely avoid the vexing question, Why were we not guided into the path which led him to better results than we realized? Suppose it is the casting of a vote, men equally good as ourselves will vote for the candidate opposed to us. It is perplexing to think of God coming into our lives, and by special influence upon each of two neighbors causing one to vote for one candidate and the other for another. Suppose it is the choice of a school to which to send your child. There are different degrees of excellence in the principals and teachers of schools, and it would not be human for us to be satisfied with anything less than the best that could be procured for the money which we invest. And yet, after entering our pupil in any place, we will very likely discover the existence of some disadvantage which we could have avoided, and it does not add to our comfort to think that God has deliberately led us into the inferior, when with His infinite knowledge He could have opened to us the superior.

The cases here supposed are only such as are of daily occurrence. The best of men, full of the Spirit and of prayer, make frequent mistakes, as they after-

wards discover, and the result is that they realize less worldly good than would have come to them by another decision. A man who is a perfect Christian may make a bad bargain, so far as this world is concerned, for himself or another. He may enter upon a business for which he is not well adapted, or be misled by the lies of a wicked man, and lose much money in consequence; or he may begin some enterprise in an unsuitable locality, and then contend for years with difficulties which many persons, better acquainted than he with the city or country, could have told him how to avoid. There is no promise that he will have the shield of the Divine infallibility stretched always over his head in the pursuit of his worldly business.

But, of course, other conditions may enter into any of these cases, or into any other case that may be supposed, which, if we understood, we would regard as more than a compensation for any loss or inconvenience. In connection with these other conditions the Divine purpose may develop itself, but we do not know it at the time; and if we did know it we would probably discern that a general direction of our affairs would reach His high ends without any special interference.

We know, at least, that though one may have made mistakes, and as a consequence been broken by disaster, yet was he not therefore neglected of God. Through all, his integrity was preserved; he has gained the possession of all the attributes which adorn and ennoble human character. He is comforted by the assurance

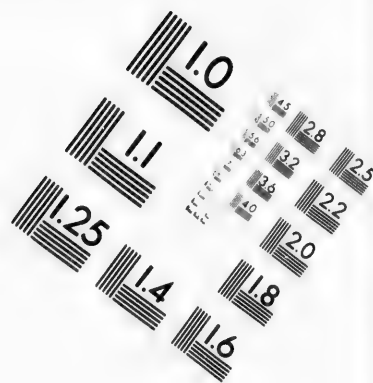
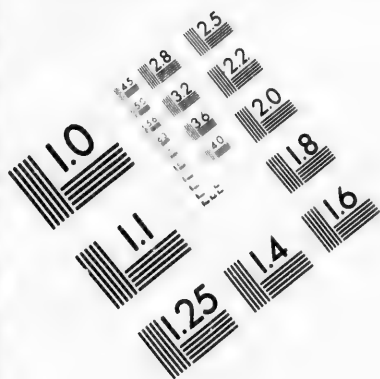


that he has not failed in the highest aim of his life, and also, that the Divine promise makes him certain that no calamity shall leave him or his children without bread. There is more comfort in this than in the bitter reflection, either that with design God crowded him upon the rocks, or that by special interposition he was guided to poverty and a cell, while another was led up broad steps to a mansion and wealth. A distinguished Bishop of the west desired to take the train which was wrecked at Ashtabula some years ago, but was prevented. He was greatly annoyed at his detention. Yet Mr. Bliss, the sweet singer, and his wife were on that train, and perished in the wreck with many others. Let it be said that by special intervention God saved the Bishop. How about Mr. Bliss? We can only say that God did not deem it necessary to interfere in his case. That is better than to say that by God's special direction he was hurried to his death.

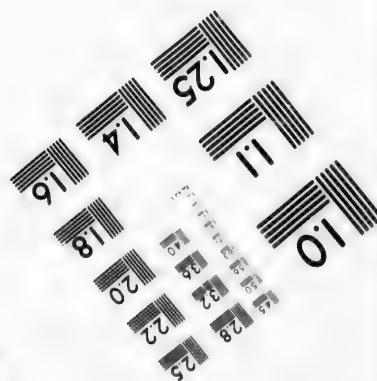
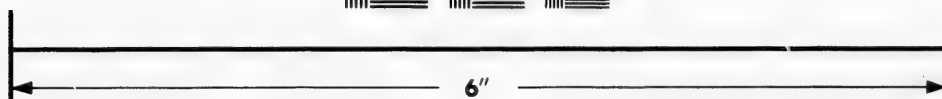
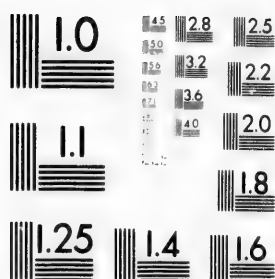
This inequality in the lives of different persons, and of the same person at different times, is constantly observed.

Our path passes through varied scenery. Good and ill fall upon us at intervals, as light and shadow fleck the sea. Now an enterprise is successful far beyond our expectations. When all lines of business are overcrowded with men, a desirable opening is unexpectedly found for self or child. The means of satisfying a disagreeable creditor's demands turns up before us like a meteor flashing in the sky. Sickness yields and





# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)



Photographic  
Sciences  
Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET  
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580  
(716) 872-4503



passes away, when there seemed to be no hope of recovery. We receive all this as a positive proof that God is working for our temporal welfare. At such a time we are sure that He has taken our worldly affairs under His own particular charge, and is directing them in every detail.

But while all this happiness is coming to us, another, just as pious, is going down in the same narrow passage through which we pass in safety and comfort. He finds no outlet and is lost in the darkness. Yea, we ourselves, at another time, are buried in the same gorge. We have not been less prayerful, nor watchful, and yet all seems to be against us. We walk through hard and thorny ways; we cannot imagine that any good can possibly be found on such a path. We weep bitter tears, and fight and contend against the stern conditions through which we are being brought. It is not so easy then to look up with smiling confidence that God, going before us, marks each step. There is a feeling that we have a controversy with the Lord. We nurse the hard thought that He is speaking against us in judgment, and this is the bitterest feeling that can enter into a human soul when the lines of life are difficult. This contention and resentment on our part may continue for days and months, or even years. There is no music in our song. We cannot raise the proper tune. We do not think then—we are not willing to believe—that God is guiding each step. Sometimes it may seem that we are forsaken by God and man. O the bitter tears we

pour out in our anguish ! O the sad lamentations we fling up against the sky ! But afterwards, in subdued tones, we humbly acknowledge our ignorance and error, and lift our hearts in thankfulness to Him who does ever what is best. When travelling by railroad we see nothing of the track, unless we stand in the rear of the last car and look back. We will then often discover the crookedness of the way through which we have been brought in safety. So, when Providence guides us, we are apt to think and feel that our lot is a hard one. But when at last the morning lifts night's dark curtain from the cloud-capped hills, and we turn our eye backward over our tear-dewed path, we can understand something of the movements of the Providential hand by which we have been led. When once we get out of the wood we understand all, and are ready to break out in strains of rapturous song and grateful praise. Providence bears us down that He may raise us up. In much of life's course chosen for us the path aims at so high a goal that it is against our earth-bound will and low desires ; and this is because God's supreme thought for us is our spiritual good.

5. Such a method of guidance is also best adapted to discipline, and to the testing of our faith.

One fact we may be assured of, and that is, that in the various steps through which we are certainly led by a Divine hand, we will not always get just what we like at the time, and therefore we are likely to doubt that God is leading us, when He has taken us most

completely under His direction. The writer remembers a domestic scene which left a vivid impression upon his mind. Having made a visit of some days with a near relative, on the day of his departure the daughter of the house, less than ten years old, desired not to go to school, but as usual was sent away at the proper time. - In less than an hour she returned home crying. Her report was that she was too late and could not be admitted. The affectionate mother, with tears even under her firm voice, and without a moment's hesitation, took the child by the hand and led her on the way to the schoolroom, saying that she thought an admission could be secured. As they disappeared through the door, the husband and father quietly remarked, "Promptness is the only way to deal with the mistakes of childhood." Now, that was an interesting case of parental guidance. Under ordinary circumstances the parent's part was fully performed when the child was directed in a general way to take up the duties of her school; but on this particular morning special circumstances rendered a special interference necessary and wise. Therefore she took the child's hand, and led her step by step all the way to the schoolroom.

There are passages which indicate pretty clearly that in like manner God takes hold upon our lives with a special purpose to determine our course, when some degree of rebellion, or disobedience, or unbelief, is clearly manifested, and when therefore we are likely to offer resistance. There is a touching narrative in the closing

portion of the fourth chapter by Mark, which describes the disciples on the sea of Galilee in a storm, and Jesus asleep in the stern of the ship :—

“And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow : and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish ? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful ? how is it that ye have no faith ? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him ?”

His placid sleep, while the wind swept over the water and the billows rose high, indicates that He regarded their own knowledge of a seafaring life as quite sufficient to meet the necessities of the case. Therefore He did not intend to interfere. It was only in answer to their bitter and somewhat petulant complaining that He arose to interfere at all. They say, “Master, carest Thou not that we perish ?” There were both fretfulness and unbelief in such a question. It was reproachful and unkind. However, he arose, and when a great calm came over

the air and the water at His will, then He mildly and sweetly upbraided them. The sting of a gentle reproach was buried under His loving words, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" The plain meaning of the language is that His presence alone should have been to them a sufficient assurance of perfect safety. They should have put forth their best endeavors, and trusted in their Lord to take care of them and to interfere in their behalf when it should please His will.

We have in this an indication that the guiding hand of our all-wise Father will not always be manifest so that we can discern its presence in a multitude of what we call the smaller concerns of life. Our confidence must be strong simply because we know that He is in the ship with us. We are assured that He knows and cares, and, if necessary, will cause His guiding presence to be felt in and about us. But this will not come at our bidding, nor when we think that we need it most, nor always in a form so pleasant that we will leap gladly towards it, nor so clearly revealed that at the time we will be able confidently to cry out, "It is the Lord!"

The points we have developed in this study are—

*First*, that the supreme aim of the Holy Spirit and Divine Providence in affecting us at all is to save us wholly from sin, and by goodness to fit us for heaven, and ultimately to bring us there.

*Second*, that inasmuch as all holiness is proved by the manner of our earthly connections, and cannot

be practised apart from earthly duties, in reaching His high aim concerning us God must largely affect us in respect of worldly things.

*Third*, that there is further reason for His guidance in temporal affairs in the fact that He has promised to His people that they shall never want certain worldly comforts.

*Fourth*, that in addition to the general direction by which, under these considerations, He seeks our highest welfare, there are also cases of special interference in our lives when He deems it wise and necessary.

*Fifth*, but with all that is involved in the above, we fail to find anything like a control of our lives in detail by the hand of God. In other words, there is a vast area of thoughts, and words, and designs, and efforts, in which we have no higher direction than our own wisdom and good sense.

It shall be our next duty to show why the idea of guidance from God, of which we may be conscious at the time, in the details of life, is not admissible under proper Scripture interpretation.



## VI.

### The Christian's Walk Not Tied in Detail.

"I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect."—GENESIS xvii. 1.

**A** MAN'S walk is his uniform movement. It is not an irregular jumping step, as when one has slipped and well-nigh fallen down, nor the slow dragging of one's self along, when he is so wearied that he almost falls upon the path.

And a person's walk includes a long series of connected movements. It corresponds in meaning with the word "way," or "path," as already described.

Walking is also a movement over which a person has some control. It is not an involuntary progress. It is not under the constraining influence of another. Each one does it for himself.

The idea of the text is that a person, in his career as a Christian, is like one walking. Determinations, choices, the rejection of one thing and the cleaving to another, will seem much of the time to be as completely in his own hands as if God never did anything for him. In maintaining the character, not of a perfect man, but of a perfect Christian, his life will be

strictly a walk—not the experience of being carried in the arms of another.

We have represented in this work that every man in his walk is under the immediate guidance of God, with the object of bringing him into the way of righteousness, and ultimately into heaven. This necessarily includes direction to a large extent in worldly things. It may come from the Holy Spirit in us, or from Providence without. But much of the time, when under this guiding influence, we cannot be absolutely certain that the hand of God is leading us, and often we oppose and contend against what afterwards turns out to have been from God. It is only when we are turned from sin to holiness, or when we are greatly strengthened in the performance of some good work, that we can at the time know positively that we are led by the Divine hand. Then we know that the power is of God because we know from the Word that what we do is good, and it is not in any human power to contend against sin, and to do good, except as led and enabled by God.

Now, the particular motive for stating these truths here is to meet certain errors which lie at the basis of all religious delusions and fanaticism. These errors have appeared again and again in periodicals widely read, and designed for the instruction of devout spirits in the higher walks of the Christian life; and they are influential because of their intimate association with most precious truths, and of the air of intense piety with which they are set forth, making it almost

an acknowledgment of an imperfect consecration to Christ if a person does not at once, and without question, fall in with them.

These mistaken views are urged by many of the best people living, in a commendable zeal to advance the interests of true religion, and to lead Christians out upon the highest plane of privilege and duty. They are a recent development upon the old and well understood doctrine of entire sanctification. But they go farther than anything taught by Wesley or his fellow-workers. They make a wholly consecrated Christian little else than an instrument used by the Holy Spirit. They present Him as so ruling and guiding the trusting saint that any infirmities of his nature are wholly overcome, and he may live and act without any mistake, because the Spirit who leads him cannot err; in short, the man is practically infallible while he submits perfectly to God.

One quotation will, as well as many, set forth the nature of these errors, against which these pages enter a mild protest. In a certain communication the writer describes himself as travelling with a definite business in hand, but on reaching a village, let us say early in the week, he soon discovers that he is not going to be successful there in his regular business, but, nevertheless, he says he had word from the Holy Spirit that he was to remain there until Friday; and then he dilates on the superiority of this new way over the old one. Now, says the writer, there is no balancing of one thing over against another, no weighing of probabili-

ties on one side and on the other, but just to look to the Spirit, and receive an intimation which places the recipient beyond the possibility of mistake. Under that direction he is practically infallible, God having taken the control of every movement of his life in detail.

Now, against such views of the Divine guidance over men's lives we speak out, for reasons which will be fully stated in this discourse.

1. The first reason is that the Bible does not teach them.

Already we have examined a large number of the passages in which we would expect to find what the mind of God is on the subject of His guidance, and the result was the discovery that their full meaning is exhausted when we take from them the idea that we will be so influenced from on high as to be surely kept in the way of righteousness.

We will notice here a few other passages which have a bearing on the subject. A few speak of the "steps" of good men as ordered by the Lord.

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delighteth in his way."—Psa. xxxvii. 23.

In the Revised Version this reads: "A man's goings are established of the Lord, and He delighteth in his way."

The original word, instead of a good man, is rather suggestive of a hero, or a mighty man. The idea is that no one is strong enough to stand unless the Lord delights in his way and takes him under His guiding

and protecting hand. There is nothing here to encourage the hope that the details of life will be taken out of our hands, but that God over all knows every man's way, and will interfere if needful.

But, in connection with this text, the question has been asked, "Does the Lord delight in a good man's mistakes?" From this the inference has been drawn that God keeps him from ever making any mistake in anything. He is practically infallible by being so guided in every detail that he can make no mistake.

Now, God delights in the purpose which controls the lives of all good men. Seeing that such do not willingly do anything which they know to be offensive to God, they do not forfeit His favor by any accident which may fall upon them. God is delighted with them just as a mother is delighted with her child. The babe may have a birth mark, or some other deformity. She is sorry for that,—she would do much to make it otherwise,—but with it all she is delighted with her child. She would not give him up for any other child in the whole earth. So God is delighted with His people's way. The way includes the general tenor or purpose of life, and this pleases Him in the case of a good man, though he may sometimes err.

A number of other texts are of like import:

"Righteousness shall go before Him, and shall set us in the way of His steps."—Psa. lxxxv. 13.

"Order my steps in Thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."—Psa. cxix. 133.

"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in

himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."—Jer. x. 3.

These are among the strongest, and either in each text itself, or in the context, it is clearly indicated that the design of the guidance is that no fall from the way of truth and righteousness may be suffered. By no correct rule of interpretation can the use of the word "steps" in these passages be made to mean that every minute detail of any man's life is immediately directed by God, so as to relieve the man himself from the duty and responsibility of thinking and deciding. In other words, each person has something more to do with his steps than simply to submit to what the Spirit tells him. Each man's steps are governed by the general purpose that controls his life, and that is, in the case of every good man, given by God. But the man must give diligence to keep each step in harmony with that purpose.

Again, in many texts in which the steps are said to be watched over by God, the design is to warn men against presumption; because God knows their lives, even to the minutest details, and for every step, and word, and thought, they will be brought into judgment. Several verses in the book of Job convey this meaning, but they are as far as language can be from conveying any idea that God controls men so that in each detail they can be sure that He is constraining them to do what they do.

We turn now to another passage worthy of careful consideration: "Good and upright is the Lord; there-

fore will He teach sinners in the way. The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way."—Psa. xxv. 8, 9.

Now, how are we to understand this? The forming of a judgment is actually the balancing of one thing against another, and the reaching of a decision between two or more different courses of action, or choices which might be made, of both of which the person concerned has some knowledge. The Bible opens to us no short way by which to avoid the necessity of exercising our intellect and powers of thought in determining what we will and will not do. This passage cannot mean that God will give every truly meek man an infallible judgment on every subject. If we try to make it mean so much we shall be greatly embarrassed by facts. When we take the meekest of earth outside of the sphere of their special qualifications, no wise man would depend upon their judgment. A person with no education is not by his meekness enabled to pronounce judgments on subjects connected with art, and literature, and science, and commerce, and manufacture, and government. If he had never been to sea, he would not be guided in his judgments about navigation so that he could bring the ship to the desired port. He and all others on board would have to trust to the captain's knowledge. It cannot mean that without knowledge a man will be enabled to give correct judgment.

Already we have examined the promise that the Spirit will guide the disciples into all truth. And,



notwithstanding that promise, the world has moved slowly toward the conquest of the earth and heavens in respect of the vast stores of knowledge which they have treasured up. Science advances only by the slow steps of patient experiment, and not with the speed of an unfolding revelation. The holiest saints are no more favored than others in coming upon discoveries of new truth. From the deeps and from the heights no willing messages are brought to them, making discoveries of truth unknown to the rest of mankind. They, as well as others, must labor up the rugged steeps, and only as their spirit is more reverent have they an advantage over others.

But let it be that with respect to right and wrong, and the choice of the path of moral safety, or in choosing associations which will lead to good or to shun evil, the man of humble prayer shall be guided by God so that his judgment will not err. That view can easily be accepted. And, moreover, any correct exposition prevents any other meaning being found in it. It is a poetical verse, and the form of the Hebrew poetry admits of a repetition of the truth in different words, so that in the same verse the last clause explains what the first clause was designed to mean. "The meek will He guide in judgment." What does that mean? "And the meek will He teach His way," the text goes on. Oh, then, this last is what the first part means—that in all judgments which relate to keeping in the right way, the meek man will be so guided as to avoid error.

The reverent and teachable spirit of the meek is more willing to accept conviction of truth than the spirit which seeks after its own preconceptions of what truth ought to be. Above all will this spirit make any person more susceptible to both the Word and Spirit of God in communicating what is the Divine will. In this the meek shall not be allowed to err, while the haughty and the vain go on blindly to their own destruction.

2. This claim to minute direction from God in every particular of life's work is objectionable on the ground that it would be a continuous inspiration, and that is more than was enjoyed by the apostles and prophets. It would be more than they enjoyed, because it is not to be supposed that they were constantly under the prophetic influence from the Spirit. Yet men to-day claim to be instructed from God concerning every word they shall speak, and every act of the most trifling nature that can come into their lives! And this independently of any relation between the act or word and the holiness of the person's character! That would make even the Bible unnecessary!

Sitting where these words are written, there are forty-two different ways to a certain point in the city. It is claimed by some that in starting to that point I may be directed by the Holy Spirit, and so distinctly that I may know that it is the Spirit speaking to me, and teaching me which of the forty-two courses I shall take. This, under ordinary circumstances, is almost trifling. It is easily admissible that to keep me out

of the way of a temptation which I may not be able to overcome, or to bring me into the way of some good work which I am to perform, either the Spirit or Providential circumstances may cause me to go out of my usual course. Such special interference is undoubtedly common in men's daily lives. But we are not at the time certain why we turn into one way instead of another. This is made to appear afterwards. But that is very different from claiming the constant working of the Spirit in us to direct about everything, to tell us at which corner on the street to turn, when to walk and when to stand, and so on, and so clearly that at the time we may say that we know we are led by God. The prophets had no more than this when most elevated by the Spirit's inspiration, and when in word or substance their message was given to them wholly by God.

3. There is also the objection that God has given other means of guidance to us besides the Spirit.

If we consider the body, we find that pain is God's duly appointed guide to us as to its conditions and wants. A child would cut off his own fingers and find amusement in doing so. But the instant he begins to draw the knife across his flesh, a sense of pain warns him to stop. Why through all his future life does the child avoid the edge of a knife? Because he has been taught by pain that the knife is dangerous to him. So when the body is sinking through want of proper nourishment, the pain of hunger comes in to guide a man to procure food. He is in no danger of mistak-

ing this guidance for something else. He knows positively that what he needs is food or drink. And when great weariness oppresses him the pain and distress of his condition instruct him that sleep is needed, and so he is correctly guided to go to rest. In any of these cases he needs no other guide than pain. It is infallible. And it is as much a divinely appointed guide as any other. Following it he is as much guided by God as if a voice from above spoke to him, giving instructions as to the course he shall pursue. Pain is in these cases as much the guidance of God as if His handwriting appeared clearly written out against the sky. It would be very absurd for a man to seek guidance from the Holy Spirit as to the times when he shall sleep, or partake of food, or to teach him when he is sick, and needs special attention on that account. Pain is the best possible guide in these things.

The eye is another of God's guides. It reveals distance, and obstacles, and the turns in our roads, and objects which we desire and seek ; and in all cases to which its functions apply we need no other guide. So, too, each of the senses is a divinely appointed guide in all things to which it can be applied.

The intellect is also one of God's guides. It has particular qualifications for collecting and directing the use of information about a multitude of things which enter into our lives, and concerning them it can speak with almost absolute authority. It discerns, for example, the relations of numbers, and can assure us that a thousand is greater than a hundred, so that we need

no further instruction on the subject. A voice from God could not make us more certain than the mind does, that a dollar will purchase more than a cent, and is, therefore, more carefully to be kept. That from certain thoughts certain conduct will arise, is also one of the things which the intellect discovers, and we need no other means of ascertaining the fact. The detection of facts from pretensions is a part of the work the intellect does for us. It applies facts to the practical works of life. It compares them one with another, and weighs one thing against another, and so writes out the proper conclusion to be deduced. Within its field of operations it is a sufficient guide, and we need nothing in addition. When a child has to learn to read, he opens that door of knowledge by using his intellect, and not by praying to the Holy Spirit for a special illumination. So in his excursions into mathematics, and literature, and science.

And in all these particulars, lying properly within the exclusive world of the intellect, no higher guidance is needed. What it cannot do in the child it can accomplish in the man. What doors it cannot open to-day it will be able to unlock to-morrow. The progress from its lower to its highest achievements exacts only the tax of patient labor and waiting.

But when we rise to the spiritual life we do need another guide. Neither pain nor intellect can discern truth from falsehood, or virtue from vice. Pain guards nothing but the existence of the body. It cannot teach it when its appetites and desires are leading

it into transgression. Pain will cry out as sharply if hunger comes from a religious fast as if it is the result of poverty. It will be as great, if one innocently falls upon a wheel and is crushed, as if some murderous hand had brought upon him a cruel death. As to any distinction between sin and holiness, pain is blind, and is absolutely no guide at all.

Neither is the intellect. All attempts to trace the distinction between good deeds and bad to a slow awakening of the intellect through the education of many generations, while traversing many centuries, are failures. They leave us where we began. We must have an original something to discover to us the simple, fundamental fact that there is such a thing as goodness in distinction from the opposite, which is badness. These two—the good and the bad—are eternally arrayed against each other. The distinction lies behind even the will of God, if such a form of speech is admissible. It is in the nature of things. If there were no God, some things would be good and some bad.

That original distinction, as a matter of fact, the intellect is not capable of discovering. The most it could do would be, after this distinction was made known, to classify, and declare some things to be good, and others to be bad; though its progress would be very slow, and subject to many great and misleading errors. It would never, in any age, after long periods of advanced civilization, be a sufficient teacher of mankind in discriminating moral good and evil. This is

not its appointed province. Hence there is need of another guide and teacher for our spiritual world and life.

This needed guide is given to us in the Spirit dwelling in our hearts. He is our instructor in all things which pertain to sin and holiness, and the proper distinction to be made between them in maintaining a righteous life.

Now, the intellect and pain are, each in its own sphere, God's guides as well as the Spirit. We may not pass them over and depend upon the Spirit to do for us what they were in our creation designed to do. We may not dishonor one part of God's plan and work, with the mistaken notion that we thereby honor Him more exceedingly in another.

A better and surer way is to consecrate common sense, and pain, and pleasure, and the seeing eye, and the hearing ear, to His high service. Then will they work for Him, and advance us toward His kingdom by their more refined susceptibilities, and all in us shall alike do His sovereign will.

4. Another objection against this notion of special guidance in every minute detail is the fact that we cannot positively know the source from which our impressions come to us.

When the Spirit makes a communication to us it is by an impression upon the heart. It is not in words. Sometimes people say they received a communication as clear as words could express, but such cases are easily understood by the fact that we think in words.



A thought enters the mind, and our own words at once rush upon it and clothe it, and from that moment the thought is represented to us by the words we at the moment associated with the thought. So may we do with an impression made upon the heart by the Spirit. Then it is easy for us to think, and to assert with great positiveness, that the Spirit spoke to us in words, because we are not conscious that we ourselves furnished the language in which the thought walks.

But if the Spirit guides by working strong impressions upon our minds, then we may mistake for His an impression which He did not give, if we have no sure means of testing our impressions. A deep affection for some person may create an impression upon the mind that we should go to the place where that person is. A towering, selfish ambition may write upon our minds the impression that we will serve the highest ends by using fraud to reach a coveted position, or to get a piece of property which we desire. One may dwell upon these impressions until he becomes certain that they are from the Spirit of God.

By just such a mental process a good man, living happily with his family, was led to feel that at some future time a certain young woman was to become his wife. No one but himself had for a moment any idea that the impression was from the Holy Spirit.

Every religious imposture has had its origin in some such mistake as to the source of strong impressions made upon the mind. Mormonism is one of the most notable illustrations of such delusion. We will

give here one sample from the Mormon bible, of the manner in which impressions which would lead to the violation of the plainly written commandments of God have been received. The writer narrates how the Spirit taught him to commit murder:—

“And it came to pass that I was constrained by the Spirit that I should kill Laban: but I said in my heart, Never at any time have I shed the blood of man, and I shrunk and would that I might not slay him.

“And the Spirit said unto me again, Behold the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands.

“And it came to pass that the Spirit said unto me again, Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands.

“Behold the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes.

“Therefore, I did obey the voice of the Spirit, and took Laban by the hair of the head, and I smote off his head with his own sword.”

Now, the fact that the commandments of the Most High declare that men shall not kill, ought to be sufficient to satisfy any man that when he has an impression that he shall take away another's life, it cannot possibly come from the Spirit, and therefore should not be obeyed. In this way we may discern the Spirit's working in us. He never directs us contrary to the written word.

It is easy to understand how, with such teaching set forth in a book which they profess to regard as sacred, the Mormons are victimized by any pretence set

up by men of any character, that they have a revelation from the Spirit. And if it is admitted that the Spirit does speak to men about every trivial thing, without any regard to the connection it sustains to sin or purity, then we have no test but the person's own word, and must let every one command us by whatever pretensions he may set up. Hence the delusion of Mormonism, numbering between two and three hundred thousands among its followers.

In the last century one Joanna Southcote was the centre of another religious delusion, which numbered one hundred thousand followers, and was equally based upon wilful deception as to the source of impressions received.

But if it is understood that the Spirit's influences are to keep us on the right side of the line which runs between evil and good, then any pretence set up by any one that he has an impression from the Spirit, can easily be tested by an application to the infallible word of truth. Does the impression agree with what this word teaches as essential to righteousness? The answer to this question will reveal the origin and real character of the impression.

5. Such claims of positive guidance from God in every particular are sure to be abused by hypocrites.

I remember a preacher who opened his sermon by a strong assertion that the Spirit was teaching him what he was about to say; and then he administered such a chastisement to his long-suffering hearers as simply displayed the vindictiveness of his own heart, and was

a complete demonstration that, at the time at least, his soul was utterly destitute of the sweet graces which prevail where the Spirit dwells. But what could be said? He claimed that what he spoke was directed by the Spirit, and was not of him alone. It must therefore be infallible.

In a certain case a man went off with his neighbor's property which had been left in an exposed position. He used it for some months, and only when it became known that the owner had discovered in whose possession it was, and was about to put in motion a process of law in relation to it, did this professedly good man take the property home; and, like Nicodemus, he chose the night for this good work, as it was night when he had taken it. The writer, knowing all these facts, checked this man's ambitious design of getting a Sunday-school under his control; and was surprised to be asked by the man himself why his appointment as leader in the religious instruction of the young had been prevented. In answer he was informed of his conduct with his neighbor's property. Then, with the whine of the superlative hypocrite, he declared that the Spirit had told him to take the article home, and he had done so as soon as directed to do it by this infallible guide.

Of course, the best things about our holy religion may be made the most use of by the worst hypocrites, and such a use of them is no reason against them; but when, with other strong and satisfactory reasons, this objection also lies against any particular teaching, it adds force to the reasons for its rejection.

6. It is also to be objected to because it attributes all our human weaknesses and errors to God. Of course it is a part of this teaching that men are made practically infallible by the Spirit's guidance. They say nothing but what He gives them to speak. They do nothing but what He prompts them to do. Therefore if anything seems to others to be error, they are mistaken. It must be right, and good, and true, because these persons claim to be guided in everything, the little and the great, by the Holy Spirit.

But no person could more perfectly illustrate the fact that human nature is full of error and mistakes than these people do in claiming that they are saved from faults of word and deed by the Spirit's guidance. Such an error must open the door wide enough to let any other fault or mistake, how vast soever its dimensions may be, follow after. But this style of teaching instructs those who receive it to lay all their tremendous blunders upon the Spirit of God. He guides them in everything, therefore He must have directed them into the mistakes that mar the beauty of their life. This is a grievous thing for human nature to do.

In a holiness manual there is this little bit of sarcasm: "Nothing is too small for the Lord to notice in the daily leading of His children. Many are too great and wise to accept or trust the guidance of God in the little things."

Now, if the meaning is that God's guidance in little things is to keep us from sinning in these little things,

then no good man is either too great or wise to both accept and trust God's guidance in them; but if the meaning is that some will not depend upon the Spirit to guide them in little things which involve absolutely nothing but more or less present ease or convenience, or gain or loss, then it were better to say, leaving out the sarcasm, since we write on the higher plane of Christian life, that many are too reverent and wise to risk the danger of attributing their own errors and weaknesses to the Spirit.

What would guidance in all the little things mean if it were not confined to the proper resistance of sin? If I turn on a street corner instead of going on to the next corner; if I buy cord instead of wire with which to hang pictures, or choose a piece of black instead of brown cloth for a garment, may I say that the Holy Spirit directed me so that at the time I knew that it was His will that I should do just what I did? If I am careless about my words I may say this; but, all the same, none of the best of men are conscious of the Spirit's guidance in such things. We know that sometimes the most momentous events have been traced to just such an origin. The finding of a nail decided the succession to a crown. A bit of twine, carelessly thrown over a cannon, saved a useful life. Far be it from us to say that God may not be directing us in any such trifles. But if so, we will not be certain at the time, as though a voice had spoken to us. We may not be able to account for our own action. It may seem altogether strange to us. It may contra-

dict our natures and our uniform course in life. But the Divine purpose controlling us will only appear when the event dependent upon our act springs up out of it full orb'd, and crowned with the Divine approbation. Because sometimes small things grow into tremendous consequences we are liable to think that every small thing must be parent to some mighty result, and to attach so much importance to trifles as to think that God immediately causes them all. It is easy to believe that if the acquittal of one falsely charged with a great crime depended upon my buying a pair of lace boots instead of gaiters, God and all the angels would stoop down to witness and direct that purchase. But where once such consequences depend upon a choice so unimportant, the same act occurs a million times as the result of human caprice; and if there were no sin in charging it upon the Holy Spirit, it would be folly and childish silliness. Where once such little things work up into the great web of a life, giving it all through one line of distinct color, ten thousand such things occur and are never again heard of in all the records of the universe. Some little things are of infinite importance—many are like the myriad flowers that bloom in the wilderness, wasting their fragrance there, seen by no admiring eye, and never going on to fruitage. To human thought they are wasted. Waste runs through the universe as a law of creation. In seed and flower, in sweet rippling waters, in wealth of soil unused by any living creature, in pure and bracing air o'er wide wastes, while good

men and sweet women suffocate in crowded cities, there is to our eyes waste of wealth and beauty. So do many things in life, passing trifles, perish forever, except in the book of the Divine remembrance some of them may, but many not, reappear in testimony to human sin or purity. The right frame of mind concerning trifles is to be ready to find in any of them an agency used by God for the grandest end, and at the same time to feel no disappointment if they fall back into the stream of life, like pebbles in the sea, never to be seen again. Then, because some small things have grown into Almightyness, we will not assert that in every trifle of life we are distinctly guided by the hand of God, and so charge upon Him our unimportant decisions and choices.

Long as the world stands, imperfection, and error, and forgetfulness, and the sharpness of movement which comes from weakness and disease, but which is liable to be attributed to another cause, will be a part of the best human life on earth. The moral nature alone will be raised wholly above the necessity of error in this life. It can retain that exalted liberty only by steadfast watchfulness and strife against all the forces of evil.

7. This teaching also develops a censorious spirit in those who receive it. They set up their dogma, and then say, "If people would seek the experience they would have no longer any doubt of the doctrine." It is a part of the teaching, that the experience must be constantly professed or it will be lost. Hence, in



declaring it under all circumstances, a person gets to feel that he is sacrificing himself in the interests of truth. After that he is past learning anything. But what a conception of God, and of His loving-kindness, that He is constantly watching His people, as though He had set a trap for them, and they, once refusing to speak, are deprived of the experience of His favor! Such an idea is calculated to make a thoughtful person suspect that religious experience exists only in the imagination. It is an easy method of disposing of all who differ from any religious notion, to assert that their religious experience is defective. "We have had the experience, and therefore we know." But it should be remembered that no experience is of any value as a teacher unless it can be clearly verified by the scriptures. That the experience of regeneration and the witness of the Spirit are so easily and so strongly verified by a reference to the word, is what gives convincing power to the testimony concerning them.

One of the gates to temptation over which a watchful eye needs constantly to be kept, in the higher Christian life, is that through which comes a tendency to disparage others, and to judge them by the standard of our own experience. Take as an illustration a sentiment like the following. In a meeting, especially for the promotion of holiness, the words were read, "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Then the comment was added, "Where are all the church members? Few of them make any profession of this blessing, therefore they cannot see God." Note

the process. First, the true meaning of a scripture word is limited by ignorance, or prejudice, or conceit, and the word is shut up to a meaning to which no correct interpretation could confine it, and then that limited meaning attached to the word is made a justification for sitting in judgment upon a large part of the Christian Church, and consigning them to the wrath of God.

While we pray for all the graces that shine for another world as well as this, and for all the promptings which point steadily upward, we pray also that we may never know any phase of Christian experience which inclines the heart to judge others in any form or degree. Human nature has never yet made any attainments in goodness or trustworthiness which entitle it, in the persons of any who live upon this earth, to sit in judgment upon their fellow-men. When in the exercise of judicial functions such a power is entrusted to men, all decisions as to matters of fact are taken out of their prerogative; and in the infliction of punishment the judge is simply the mouth-piece of a written, inflexible law. The Christian religion makes no man the judge of others without any of these wise restrictions.

8. This teaching leaves no proper scope for the development of our manhood. If these views were correct, the will would indeed be educated into perfect submission to the will of God, but all the rest which makes us human would remain an uncultivated waste, and a man would be a mere machine, never exercising

his faculties about anything. The Spirit, which never fails, would tell him when and how to do everything, and there would be no remaining use for the intellect and sensibilities.

9. Yet another objection to this idea of special guidance in all minute affairs of life is that it makes the different results which different persons get out of life more perplexing.

One man is so guided that his family enjoy millions of dollars in this life, while another equally dependent upon God drags through life never rising above poverty, and falling often almost to a position of dependence. Now, if the Spirit guides directly in everything, then business capacity has nothing to do in determining the different positions of these two families, and the one could easily have been put into as good a position as the other.

If it be said that perhaps the family in the inferior worldly position would not have made as good use of great wealth as the other, there is the quick reply that if the Spirit guides men in everything, then He would have led the one as He did the other to make the wisest possible use of any worldly advantages which came into his hands.

Great differences in worldly circumstances would be much harder to bear under such a dispensation of the Spirit, than under the generally accepted understanding that God has made men for different works in life, and has in all particulars endowed them for the particular work they are destined to perform.

"Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge; He putteth down one, and setteth up another."

But even in this passage the context seems to indicate that this "putting down" and "setting up" relates to the essential distinctions between holiness and purity, and the final rewards and punishments which are sure to come to them.

But, nevertheless, there is so much of Providence in life, and we are so incapable of discerning clearly when the hand of the Lord is pushing us forward into any place, prominent or otherwise, that gratitude toward Him is assuredly the right spirit for us to cultivate in all worldly success and prosperity. For a good balance sheet at the end of a year's business, for the growth in value of property owned by us, for the attendance of patrons who pay us for what we do, let us assuredly thank God the same as if our skill had done nothing.

10. One more point we will urge here against this style of teaching is that it makes our worldly convenience or pleasure of as much importance as the soul's salvation. It places both upon the same level. If the Spirit comes directly into my life to show me what to purchase for the amusement of my child, and where to turn in walking along the street, and when to speak when I am in any company, and for whom I am to vote in an election, when equally good men vote on different sides—and yet both equally claim the Spirit's guidance in the act,—or to what school I am to

send my child, what more can He do to save my soul from sin, and to enable me to stand forth in the clear light of a cleansed and sanctified nature, ready for the meeting with the Bridegroom? Why, He has attached the same importance to the merest trifles in my worldly life as to the infinite concerns of the soul!

But, it may be said, these worldly matters are connected with the soul's salvation. When that is the case, then all that has been presented here has declared that the Spirit guides in the most minute concerns to the extent of saving from sin all who will be so saved.

So much time and space have been devoted to the examination of the results of an error which many will consider as not worth opposing, for its weakness is obvious to them at a glance. Still, it is worth while to raise a signal against any error that may mislead devout people. This is especially true when the acceptance of the error is associated with the profession of superior piety, and there is room for any to fear that its rejection is due to a want of full devotion to Christ, and a perfect acceptance of His work.

11. "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." To walk under the influence of a guide is not the same as being carried like a helpless child. The walk is the man's own act. He must pursue his course through paths along which everything appeals to him; but every appealing voice shall soon be silent. All that he sees will speedily perish. It is his supreme work in life to lift above all worldly aims an example of moral perfectness. While the hand reaches down, and the

eye sometimes must look down, to the common things that perish with the day, the heart must be kept so above them all as to bring out of them some strength to high moral purpose, some tribute of success to consecrated endeavor. A part of the man must act down on the lower plane, but always he has in him the confidence that he is better than the things which fill his laboring hands. It is his duty, not to drag the best part of his life down to the lower level, making the things found there equal in importance to what is best in his life, but to keep them ever subordinate, and rising from them into the moral and spiritual atmosphere, to make them serve his noblest aspirations. He is to walk amid these things, but he is to be perfect by living in the moral and spiritual. When, like a soaring eagle, any worldly trifle lifts itself up into the pure light of the sun by connecting itself with great spiritual results, let it be welcomed as a companion to the sun, but let none be thereby deceived into taking also the cranes of the muddy brook for towering eagles. To be perfect is to walk among worldly things as much as need be, but all the time to keep above them, and to carry in the soul the mighty, all-mastering conviction that we are made for grander and nobler things than any which appear in our present life. The spiritual is everything. The present is only a temporary condition. To keep it beneath our feet, and to catch as often as possible clear glimpses of the better, spiritual life, and to live wholly in that form, is to be perfect before God.

## VII.

### The Ministry of the Spirit to Human Infirmary.

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”  
—ROMANS viii. 26.

**L**ET us first get a clear idea of what infirmities are. It is correct to say that they include all innocent imperfections of both body and mind. But, to avoid misapprehension, let it at once be noted that evil habits are not infirmities in the sense in which this word has come to be understood in religious discourse. They certainly are infirmities in one sense, but they are not innocent imperfections. Every indulgence of an evil habit is a sin. If I love intoxicating drink so well that I drink to drunkenness, I commit a sin every time I get drunk. It is no defence that the habit has become so strong by indulgence that it completely bears me down with overwhelming power. If it were the hundredth thousand time that I had been drunk, still it would be a sin for me to be in that condition. Or if I am a habitual liar or thief, every lie or act of theft is

a sin. The temptation may have been almost irresistible: there may have been hunger, or wrong committed against me; and I may have become so accustomed to lie and steal that either act now makes no strong impression upon me; nevertheless, it is a sin all the same. I am responsible for allowing an evil habit to develop its strength upon my character, and therefore am guilty in every separate act I do under the influence of that bad habit.

With, then, the clear understanding that evil habits are not included in the infirmities here spoken of, we use the words "innocent perfections of character" without any difficulty in realising what is meant.

To measure the whole area of infirmities we must set before our thought an absolutely perfect man. In body and mind he should be everything which can be conceived of as necessary to fill up God's idea of what a perfect man ought to be. There have never been but three such persons on this earth. Adam and Eve, before the fall, were surely just what God wanted a man and woman to be. The body of each was perfect in all that constitutes manhood and womanhood. Their minds were the intellects of man and woman, made after God's thought of what a perfect man and woman should be. They were perfect. And Christ was likewise an example of absolutely perfect manhood in every particular.

Now, by just so much as any one, in comparison with these perfect human beings, falls short of their



perfectness, he is encompassed with infirmities. Everything in them which he lacks is an infirmity in him. Wherein he cannot measure up to their height, he is an imperfect man. It will therefore at once appear that the infirmities of men cover a very wide field.

Again, our infirmities are made manifest not only by comparing ourselves with an absolutely perfect man, but also by comparisons with each other. Place any two human creatures side by side, and each will find himself defective in some things the other possesses. Take, for example, the knowledge of music. To one without any natural ability in this direction, the attainments of an accomplished musician are wholly incomprehensible. The leader of a great orchestra brought down his baton with a force which secured instant silence. He then said, "Violin 87 is one quarter tone out of harmony." Out of more than a hundred violins, and many other instruments, he selected and specified that one which was at fault a quarter tone. Now, to a person like the writer of these pages, who knows nothing of music except to enjoy it when it moves him, it is as impossible to understand the act of that conductor as it is to comprehend God's omniscience. In comparison with such an accomplished musician, the writer's imperfection is manifestly great. This is only one of many cases.

Take the power of distinguishing countenances. A lady of our acquaintance, who should have been a portrait painter, is so gifted in this way that the impression made by looking on a face never fades from

her mind. Going into a strange city, in a short time all the shopkeepers whom she meets, and the drivers and conductors of street cars even, are distinctly remembered, until her refined husband facetiously declares that he is ashamed of her. Entering a family the second time, where there are a dozen children, she recognizes each one at a glance, notwithstanding the striking family resemblance. Now, there are many people who, in meeting even intimate friends, are often embarrassed in distinguishing them from one another. To such persons the attainments of the lady mentioned seem like a kind of omniscience, and in comparison with such gifts, the imperfections by which others fall short of perfect humanity are great indeed.

We have also heard of persons capable of adding three, four, or five columns of figures all at once, and as rapidly as the average arithmetician ascends one column. In comparison with such an endowment, how great is the shortcoming of most men. The field of our infirmity, under such contrasts, grows wider by infinite lengths than the field of our efficiency.

Into this field we must also bring the imperfections of the body wherein we come short in comparison with the men and women whose bodies are absolutely perfect. There are the physical defects which attend sickness, or linger after it, or accompany the progress of years, as deafness, failing eyesight, and declining energy. But, in addition to these imperfections, in our best state our bodies come far short of perfect

physical manhood. Men are by no means equal to each other in abounding energy. To a larger degree than is generally recognized, the different heights to which men attain in their earthly career are due to different degrees of physical energy and endurance. It goes without saying that men differ in the strength and fineness of their intellectual natures. But allowing for all this, much more than is generally supposed depends upon the power of the body. Given an average intellect, with a physical endurance capable of incessant application sixteen hours a day, through forty or fifty years, and you have the man who will climb the most giddy heights of fame and usefulness; while the blazing genius, who in youth dazzled the wondering skies with the brilliant promise of his future career, is left far behind, limping and helpless upon the path.

Such facts, and they are not by any means uncommon, simply illustrate that men have many imperfections in comparison with each other. And by just so much as any one, in any particular, falls short of another man's excellences, are his infirmities revealed in comparison with that other. A certain very useful man has fallen into the unwise habit of repeating, in almost every speech he makes, that he is doing two men's work. Why, what does two men's work amount to? What is one man's work? There is no fixed gauge in the universe determining just how much anyone must do in order to be recognized as a man. Probably no two men are exactly equal to the same clearly

defined amount of labor. Any man's work is simply the amount of work he can accomplish in justice to all the conditions. In many cases it will be double what some men do, and yet not half what others accomplish, though, speaking fairly, each all along the line is doing a man's work—that is, he is doing his own work as a man.

Let us then take up the general idea that everything embraced in perfect manhood which we lack goes to make up the sum total of our infirmity.

It is also necessary to remember that, so far as religious discussion goes, these infirmities are innocent imperfections. It was not in our power to prevent their existence. We have, in ourselves, no means of correcting them; we are not in any sense to blame for them, as we are in the case of an evil habit.

But though innocent, they are, nevertheless, very inconvenient. They cause us to disappoint ourselves and others. Through them we may suffer pain or loss and bring the same upon others, when the strongest desire of our hearts is to help and bless them. It can not but be, therefore, that these innocent imperfections are a great trial to us; it is not possible that they can distress others as much as they do ourselves.

II. Let us turn now to the ministry of help of which we are assured in the text. The Spirit, that is the third Person in the Trinity, dwelling in His real personality in the heart of every true believer, will help. It is not simply the temper of one's own mind, which is sometimes spoken of as the man's spirit, but God in him, who helps.

III. The Spirit "helpeth" our infirmities. Now the word in the original, which is here rendered "helpeth," conveys distinctly the idea of co-operation. I have seen a wheel with a chain running over it in a groove, used to lift burdens out of a well or into the upper flats of a high building. One may turn it, or two, one standing on each side, may expend their strength upon it, both striving to turn the wheel in the same direction. Each aids the other, both labor toward the same object and end.

Or it may be the bearing of a burden. Take the case of Jesus carrying His cross, and the man Simon bearing it after Jesus. They united their strength to accomplish the same end. In both these cases the men work over against each other, co-operating, and striving to accomplish the same object. That is just the idea conveyed in this passage. The Spirit co-operates with the man in contending against these imperfections and making his way in spite of them.

1. The Spirit will so aid the believer in this conflict that he will be kept from falling into any sin through his infirmities. Our imperfections, though innocent in themselves, lay us open to temptations which could come through no other avenue. Impatience (which is an opening for almost every vice), and fretfulness, and envy, and jealousy, and anger, and sloth, and exacting selfishness, and luxurious indulgence, can all be traced in their origin to some innocent imperfection of our nature. In comparing ourselves with others, the defects which are revealed in

our characters are a cause of our envying others who are in a larger degree free from them. Nothing is more common than jealousy of achievements which would be impossible to us under any circumstances. If to go limping along the way is the best that we can do, it lays a great tax on human nature not to be angry when another strides past us with seven-leagued boots. Though a lower place is the highest for which we are in any way fitted by our qualities, nevertheless it breeds impatience with our lot to see others walking easily up to a higher place. Being conscious that our energy will only sustain a limited application to labor, it is easy to revert to the other extreme, and indulge ourselves to an extent that begets slothfulness. The tender ministries which generally wait upon the sick, soothing their pain, and supplying their wants, sometimes educate them into a frame of exacting selfishness. All sick chambers are not gates to heaven: some are simply thrones of imposition, claiming service from willing hands which need relief more than the one to whom they minister. So, in many ways, the infirmities of the flesh and mind, if not well guarded, open the way for the easy entrance of sin.

But in addition to this, by just so much as any imperfection stamps us with a lower type of manhood, are we more susceptible to every temptation, though it does not appeal directly to any particular weakness of our nature. But in this text we are assured that if we accept the Spirit's suggestion, and yield to His guiding influence, we shall be so aided and sustained

in our struggle against the weaknesses of our nature, that they shall not be allowed to draw us into any sin. Through them we shall not lose our good hope, we shall not forfeit our title to heaven.

2. Further, by the Spirit's ministry we shall, in some degree, come out from under the power of these infirmities. To some extent we may rise above them. Can there be any doubt that a man in whom the Holy Spirit dwells has, from that fact, a better body and a better mind? "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God?" According to the light enjoyed by most men, had any of us been writing this passage we would not have written it as it is. We would have feared some dishonor to the Holy Spirit in speaking of Him as dwelling in our bodies. We might have spoken of Him as dwelling in our minds. But Paul certainly wrote it correctly. Taking the word as it is, it is true to its meaning to infer that the body in which the Spirit dwells will be a better body on account of His presence. We know that this is the case, if in nothing else than the natural effect of the virtues which must attend His indwelling. The scrupulous temperance, the exacting cleanliness, and the reasonable exercise, which must be a part of the life of every man in whom the Spirit makes His home, are alone calculated to promote healthfulness of the body, to increase its energy and endurance, and to lengthen the days of its pilgrimage on earth.

But, it is reasonable to expect that, even beyond



these natural effects, the Spirit will by His presence make the body more capable and enduring. It is in harmony with the aims of His mission that everything in our humanity which He touches shall be made better by the contact.

Therefore will the intellect be a better intellect because of His presence and ministries. Unclouded by passion, not distorted by the raging storm, its judgment will sit like a mountain-top above the mists, in the pure, serene air, capable of untrammelled action.

It will follow, therefore, that as the days and years of a pure and holy life pass by, the power to do well what we think and intend well, will grow in us. Achievement will become daily the more willing servant of every noble purpose. The ready hand will hasten to obey the purified desire. Though the intention to do right in all things may be perfect, and therefore not capable of becoming purer with time and experience, so that we may not grow into any clearer or fuller sense of God's approbation, yet we can daily become more capable of carrying out the high and noble designs we have formed. Though on the side of our life which lies toward God we may be no more innocent than before, yet on the side that lies before men our life may grow daily more perfect and helpful. We may have better success in executing what we had long intended to be without fault. In this we have exhibited at least one meaning of the exhortation, that we go on "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord."

In this respect, as well as in another on which we



do not now dwell, the most holy man on earth may steadily grow in grace up to the last day of his life.

3. The Spirit further helps us in this conflict with our imperfections by enabling us patiently to bear them. And this is much. One thing very hard for human nature to bear is assignment to lower service when others pass on to higher. They do greater things than we, and yet we have a persuasion within us that we only fall short of their line of achievement through the absence of a very little more power. Our strength bears us so near to the point that our failure is almost equal to success, it is failure. It does not reap the rewards, it gains no crown. Perhaps there is no more intense pain of disappointment than to have the gifts which can discern grand things, and realize both what they are and how they might be reached, yet to lack by only a little that degree of heat and energy which would enable us to achieve them. Under such conditions men feel that they must break through the bars that confine them. Passion's lifted hand smites in rebellion against the sky. Burning aspiration even reproaches God for not arming its wings with a little more sustaining power.

But what is even harder to bear is the knowledge that our imperfections often pain and hinder those to whom we most ardently desire to give encouragement, and comfort, and help.

It is certainly much if, under these trying circumstances, the Spirit will enable us to bear patiently the restraints from which we may not escape.

By so much we know that the Spirit will aid us in turning our wheel or bearing our burden. More we cannot say.

4. Some whose instructions point along the higher walks of the Christian life have quite recently developed, in connection with this promise, the idea that the Spirit will completely remove all these defects of the human nature in the case of those who will by faith accept His ministry; and that then, as indicated in a previous discourse, the man being wholly under the Spirit's guidance, even to the minutest details, he will be in practice an absolutely perfect man. The Holy Spirit has promised to lead us out of much darkness into great light; but His promise to us does not include the attainment of absolute human perfection in this world; and, indeed, that is against the meaning essential to the structure of words and sentences in the divine revelation. The text assures us of the Spirit's co-operation with us against our infirmities. Then we must co-operate with the Spirit; we must work in defending these open places, as well as He. We have already seen that here the word "helpeth" embodies the idea of two working together. If the Spirit abolished every infirmity, then we would have no part in the work. He would have done it all at one stroke.

5. Then the meaning expressed here is in perfect harmony with the plan of human life in this world for every part of our manhood. Life is a discipline. It is for education. It is only by effort and study that

either body or intellect rises from lower to higher degrees of excellence. In our spiritual life this necessary watchfulness and effort agrees perfectly with those scriptures which instruct us that we are to "so run that we may obtain," to "war a good warfare," to "fight the good fight of faith," and that this conflict is to continue as long as we are in this world. The weapons of warfare may only drop out of our hands when we are ready to reach up and take the crown. It is true that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places." But these same active agencies may use our infirmities as a mode of attack upon us. They do this in reality. They inflame prejudice until it governs us. They blind judgment until our errors seem wisdom. To persuade one that he is above the danger of making a mistake is a bold aim even for such subtle powers. To bring piety under such a delusion is a master-stroke of the subtle hand of the evil one. Against such error, as well as against infirmities inseparable from our life in the flesh, the saints are enabled to carry on this glorious war, and are encouraged in it by the Spirit's co-operation.

6. But some teachers of holiness assure us that this matter is placed beyond a doubt. They appeal to their own experience, and assert that in them the Spirit has so wrought as to place them beyond the danger of error. Some have even gone to such an ex-

treme as to ask their followers to be guided wholly by this experience of theirs.

Now, with reference to such claims, it must be said that any man's experience in anything is an unsafe guide unless there be some infallible standard by which to test it. Men are being constantly deceived as to what they think they see with their own eyes, and what they think they know by their own feelings. A teacher of science, addressing a large class of undergraduates, said to them concerning a color, "This is yellow. You will please to call it yellow, no matter what it may seem to be to your eyes. I have seen it defined by the spectroscope, and I know." This teacher foresaw that some in his class would believe their own eyes in preference to a scientific test; and this is only one of many examples easily adduced of self-deception as to what we think we know by sight.

The mistakes are not less common when we go into the arena of our feelings. Here is a world in which, for thousands of years, the wisest of men have been honestly and earnestly laboring to determine what is what, and even yet the mists with a dimming veil overhang the outline of the hills, so that we are never safe in traversing that mysterious world of our inward experiences unless we have a sure guide and a test that was never mistaken. Though a man were the truest and purest man on the face of the earth, yet he has no right to complain if people attach no value to his religious experience as soon as it departs from what is clearly taught in the Bible. There are religious experiences

which through all the Christian ages have been the most effective human instrument in the salvation of men. They are yet, and doubtless will be to the end of time, the most powerful agency men can wield in the conversion of the world. But why are they so mighty? Because they harmonize strictly with the experiences of all others in the same line; but more because they are in perfect harmony with the clearly understood meaning of the Bible. If a man says he has received a new heart and a new spirit, that he hates sin and loves purity; if he claims that God has forgiven his sins, and that the Holy Spirit has given him the assurance that he is a child of God, the Bible sustains him in every point he claims, in every word he utters. Because what he declares to be his experience is in such perfect harmony with the unchanging Word of truth, men cannot gainsay it, and it is attended with mighty convincing power. If he claims that by faith in Christ and dependence upon the Holy Ghost the very sources of his thought, feeling, affections and desires have been so cleansed that he neither loves sin nor does it, that he will not willingly do anything which he knows to be offensive to God, and that he lives every hour confident that God is pleased with him, the Word sustains him in that testimony, and it will carry conviction to all who have sufficient spiritual discernment to understand its meaning. But should anyone profess that he has experienced the elimination of all infirmities from his being, and that everything he does is controlled by the Spirit, and so

is as if the Spirit Himself did it, and therefore must be above all mistake, he claims what is not supported by the experiences of the best of men, and what goes farther than the clear and express teaching of the Bible. He ought not then, by all reasonable rules of judging human speech and conduct, to be distressed if men attach no weight whatever to what he proclaims as his experience. This is not saying that men will regard him as false. They can easily admit his truthfulness, but ignore his testimony on the ground that he is simply mistaken, and can know nothing positively of what he speaks of with all the confidence of assured knowledge.

7. That we may better understand all that would be included in believing that the Spirit helping our infirmities is not co-operation with us against them, but completely delivering us from them. let us return to a view of the field of our infirmities as it was opened in the beginning of this discourse. We saw that it includes every imperfection wherein we fall short of absolutely perfect humanity. Now, if the Spirit is to supply our lack by wholly removing one infirmity, why not another, yea, why not all? I, for example, would ask for myself a deliverance from infirmity in respect to musical achievement, and the discrimination of countenances, so that I would never fail to recognize a friend, yet this is impossible unless the Spirit will add new gifts to His creation and fill out any person's manhood with qualities which he does not possess, and which, if God had wanted him to

have, He would undoubtedly have given to him when he was first made. But such a suggestion only needs to be mentioned to be rejected. I will go on to the resurrection just the man I am, except as religion purifies the moral, and education develops the intellectual, and temperance and exercise build up the physical. Realizing all the fulness of the Spirit promised to any in the Bible, and having a perfect willingness to follow the slightest impression He makes, yet if I attempt musical performance I will only show my ignorance. And again and again it will be my misfortune to confuse the face of one acquaintance with that of another, and through such errors I will give pain to friends whom I would not willingly wound for any consideration. My memory will often fail to honor my draft upon it, and the deposit I have made with it will be a total loss. And the Spirit having once created a body for me to use during my earthly probation, to take care of, and to improve by wise and kind treatment, will not at any advanced stage of my life create in me new and original qualities not before enjoyed. He will not make my strength equal to that of others whose work I may covet to do.

As soon as we come to this question with anything like a proper conception of what is included in our innocent infirmities, any talk about the Spirit removing them, or enabling us to do as well as if they had never existed in us, appears palpably absurd. There can be no better illustration of the continued existence

of infirmity than is seen in the person who professes that he is saved wholly from any danger of error through infirmity. That profession exhibits the tremendous error into which he has habitually fallen. Ceasing to strive against his infirmity with the aid of the Spirit, it dominates him completely and constantly, and to all others adds the infirmity of blindness.

8. Is there then no hope of our reaching a manner of life perfectly satisfactory in all particulars? If this question means satisfaction in all things to other people, we answer emphatically, No. Of the best man, even after death, it will be said, "He had his faults." If it means satisfaction to ourselves, we answer: No, not if we cultivate a proper sensibility, and a due regard to the just claims of other people upon us. Religion should make us constantly more tender and refined. If it does not do this it is of little use to us in this world. But if it has this effect we will every year feel more keenly every inconvenience and discomfort we may inadvertently cause to others. If a Christian is satisfied with his errors and faults, notwithstanding the discomfort which they cause to men, there is room to fear that his theories of religion are blunting his sensibilities, instead of refining them. A perfectly satisfied Christian is in a bad way. He is certainly wanting in one of the essential elements of true Christian character. But the Christian may go on perfectly satisfied with his life so far as innocence toward God is concerned. The fact that he meant to help all others, and save them from discomfort, or



trouble, or pain, will prevent his feeling any sense of guilt in the sight of God, and he will go on still happy in His favor, but yet feeling dissatisfied with his imperfect achievement, and even grieved that these defective bodies and minds prevent his doing better for others than he does.

The hope of the resurrection from the dead includes in it the elements of a perfectly satisfactory life toward men as well as toward God. The last we may have now, the other we may look forward to in confident expectation when the work of our redemption is complete.

9. But the persistence of infirmities in us does not afford any excuse to indolence or selfishness to go on just as they are, without attempting to improve, and excusing all their failures by saying they cannot help it, for they were made so. It is that we may continually try, and watch against our weakness, that the Spirit helpeth us. If we cease to strive He ceases to work with us, for there is no co-operation. To be satisfied to remain as we are is a sinful frame of mind. To indulge such indolence is to offend God, and to forfeit His favor. The Spirit offers to us His continual help in a hard conflict. We may steadily rise to better things if we will steadily try. Ultimately the cloud of war shall be rolled away. The storm shall cease. Then our imperfect humanity shall be clothed upon with perfectness. Until then we work in hope toward our grand ideal.

10. In the meantime we have sufficient cause to

awaken the ceaseless praise of devout and grateful hearts, in that the Spirit will so work in us as to save us from sin, and prevent the forfeiting of our place in heaven. When I think of what sin is, and what it has done, it seems mercy enough that I may escape it. One sin spread desolation over the world. One of my sins is just as evil as that first sin. It is true the conditions are such that it could not work wreck, and ruin, and desolation so widespread, and, except so far as I myself am concerned, so enduring in its effects. Yet it is the same in kind. It belongs to the family, and I don't want to experience even its touch. Once, living in a city subject in the spring time to be overwhelmed with a flood, I made a pastoral call. It had rained during the forenoon, and, near where I sat, water was dripping through the ceiling, perhaps one drop a minute. The lady apologized profusely, and complained much of the leaking roof. I pointed to a mark running around the room on the wall, only a few feet below the ceiling, and asked her what it meant. She replied that it showed how high the water had risen during the spring flood. I suggested that, after such an experience of the desolating power of water, she should not complain of a leakage in the roof which only allowed a drop a minute to fall on the floor. But she asked me if I would like a leaking roof, and the constant dropping of the water, even though it could not overwhelm me, and drive the family out of the house. When the flood came she left the house, but as long as she was going to live in it she wanted a dry

ceiling and a dry floor. I answered, "No; I want no leaking roof, though a flood may be quite impossible." So it is with sin. It has once flooded the human race out of all good possessions, and thereby we know what its temper is, and therefore we don't want to be touched by it—not even a drop from the ceiling can be endured—and, to escape its power, to be sure that we can, by the blessed Spirit's ministries, keep it out of our lives in every degree, is indeed to rejoice in a wonderful salvation. In this world our moral nature may be perfectly redeemed. The intellectual and the physical natures must linger longer under the influence of our family misfortunes. But ultimately they too will be wholly delivered. Until then the Spirit is one with us to aid in maintaining our side of the conflict. The saints have cause only for rejoicing that by so much Satan is under their feet. Without their consent he can do them no harm, even through their imperfections. They must live with them, but they have blessed company in their strife and endeavor.

A portion of the text which has not been touched upon at all here is worthy of a full consideration in another discourse.

## VIII.

### *The Holy Spirit's Intercession.*

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities : for we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.—  
ROMANS viii. 26.

**I**N the last discourse we discussed the co-operation of the Spirit with us in our efforts against every weakness and imperfection of our natures. This was properly brought out by the first clause of this text.

What immediately follows is a striking illustration of this ministry of the Spirit to our help in respect of our infirmities. Perhaps in no direction have we such an exhibition of infirmity as in the fact that "we know not what we should pray for as we ought." We fall so far short of absolutely perfect manhood that we do not know what is best for us. We are like a child who would ask for a dangerous knife because the blade glitters, or for poison because it is wrapped in bright tissue paper. We would ask for, and if we could we would take, what would hinder our approach to a perfect state, instead of what would favor such worthy progress.

I. 1. One reason why we "know not what we should pray for" is the controlling influence which our bodies have over us. For weary generations and centuries the human family lived almost wholly for the body. To continue its existence was about the only object in life. To feed and indulge it included the whole area of pleasure and enjoyment. The only intellectual life of those times was confined to the monasteries. The spiritual life of the people was wholly entrusted to the Church, and that meant to the priesthood of the Church.

There is manifestly an improvement now, but even yet, as in every age of the past, the body delights in ease, and luxury, and indulgence of every kind, and presses itself into the most prominent place whenever any attempt is made to seek the best interests of our whole, complex manhood. No wise prayer is possible until this body is repressed, and its bold claims forced into silence. We must learn to regard it as a usurper, filling all our space with itself, when in reality it has a right only to a very subordinate place.

2. Another cause of our ignorance of the things we should pray for is our natural conceits, prejudices, and passions.

A man may have so much conceit of his own ability that he cannot possibly get the idea into his mind that he needs any Providential help or guidance in his affairs. As Nebuchadnezzar said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" so such a man will think in his heart concerning every stroke of success that

comes into his life. I have known a man who had such affluence of physical vigor that he lifted himself up in a time when an epidemic was raging, and said there was no danger of such a body as his being attacked. Such conceit must affect a person's prayers.

And who can tell where the influence of prejudice begins or ends? It is a force as silent in its action as the light or heat, as imperceptible in its effects upon us as the gathering dew on the grass; but with every one a potent factor in determining the judgment passed upon men and events. It would greatly influence both the tone and the substance of the prayers all would offer, if left wholly to themselves in the use of that privilege.

3. Among the hindrances we find in this duty is the fact of our strong prejudice in favor of this present world. Left to ourselves we would most certainly ask whatever would be most favorable to our worldly estate. It cannot but be that any parent will desire that his child succeed at school or in business. His prayer for the boy starting to school for the first day would be that he make friends among both scholars and teachers, and that he may rise in his class, if not to the first place, at least as near to it as possible, and that at the close of the term he may pass his examinations in a creditable manner.

Of the same nature would be our natural prayer for a child when entering upon the study or practice of a profession, or upon any business enterprise. We would want him to succeed, and it seems assuredly

right to us that under any conditions he should succeed.

So of our worldly estate. What Christian man ever lived who did not see distinctly that it would be for the glory of God for him to accumulate wealth? What new and wide avenues of usefulness would open before him, if he had large sums of money at command, which are all forbiddingly closed against the knocking of poverty! What blessings to the poor would flow through his hand; what relief to struggling churches, and to weak missions, and what aid to all charitable enterprises, would run out to meet the solicitation of need, if only he had wealth! It is natural to think so, and to pray accordingly; but in view of the unknown hiding places in our natures yet understood so imperfectly, and the many pages of life's great book yet unopened, of the long stretch of the way untraversed, and of the vast uncertainties hidden in that unexplored future, it is safe to say that these natural impulses, which seem absolutely without fault, would lead us to ask many things not best for us in view of all our lives and the eternity which stretches out before us.

II. Under such disabilities the Spirit ministers to our aid in the duty of prayer. The word rendered "intercession" in this place does not occur in the same form in any other part of the New Testament. It is a verb in composition with a preposition. The verb is found elsewhere, but not combined with the same preposition. The idea conveyed is that of being present

with another, to help him. A mother walks with her child over slippery places in the way, that she may help if needed. A guide goes with the traveller up the rugged mountain paths to be ready to render him assistance if it is necessary. An advocate sits by his client in court to assist him in the conduct of his case. So the Holy Spirit is in the hearts of good men to assist them in every way, but especially to direct and aid them in prayer.

1. One thing He does is to bring into the mind proper subjects for prayer. These are all around us all the time. But we have no power to see them in the light of subjects claiming our prayers, until the Spirit puts that view of them into our hearts. We are so crowded with what concerns ourselves and our families that we would scarcely think of anything else. But the Spirit teaches us to dwell upon other topics, and to bring them within the scope of our prayers. Let a great grief overshadow any home. The child of much affection is dead. The husband or wife lies in silence, unmoved by all the cries of anguish, and all the tears, of a mourning household. After the funeral those who are left walk on in their loneliness, and think more than they were before accustomed to do of other families left in loneliness and sorrow. Day by day they glance over the column in the newspapers recording the deaths of the day, and now their hearts are touched by notices of deaths in families to which they are entire strangers, which before would not have caused them a passing thought. Under these circum-



stances the Spirit will prompt to them each of these cases as a proper subject for their prayers. From the depths of the heart will be wrung the cry, "God bless the poor mother whose babe has gone down among the silent ones. God support the widow who walks on alone. God help the family of orphan children now deprived of their natural protector." If it were not for the Holy Spirit, the same conditions would awaken no feeling in our hearts but natural sympathy for those in a sorrow like to that through which we have ourselves passed; but by His ministry we are led to see in all such cases suitable subjects for our earnest prayers.

When laboring on a charge in the country, the writer passed every week through a piece of woodland in which, for months, he saw a poor man first chopping, and then rolling the logs together and burning them. The toil seemed heavy, and made a strong impression upon the heart of the plain pastor as he rode by upon his regular duties. By and by the poor laborer had sown the field, and he was seen there no more as the pastor passed. But through all the following summer he never went along the highway leading by the side of the field without lifting his heart to God in prayer that the poor toiler might reap a good crop from the field on which he had expended so much strength.

To many minds these simple illustrations will provoke a smile. Some see God in nothing. Others see in what is actually the result of God's immediate working upon our hearts and minds, only the natural

effects of causes hidden in the natures of all men without exception. Many will agree with a principle constantly recognized in these studies, that all good thoughts, and feelings, and purposes, are given to our hearts by the Holy Spirit in us, and that without His influence aiding and enabling we would never have as much as the least thought of goodness. This principle lies at the basis of every line written in these pages. Those who accept it will see in the illustrations given above evidences of the Holy Spirit working in us and teaching us what to pray for. In this way our natures are receiving a deeper culture in the direction of goodness than all the refining influences of society and education can give. A person instructed to enter into the sorrows and trials of others, by praying for them, is sure to become more unselfish, and in every way more helpful to all who fall within the sphere of his influence, than could possibly be the case under any other circumstances.

2. Another help we have from the Spirit's ministry is the power to persevere in prayer.

The parable of the unjust judge contained in the beginning of the 18th chapter of Luke is certainly designed to teach us that our faith should not be discouraged by delays in receiving answers to our prayers. The reasoning used there does not in any sense compare the great Father of all to an unjust judge who fears not God, neither regards man; but it contrasts the one with the other, and the idea is, that if constant appeals would produce upon such a

man the effect desired, at least in so far as his yielding to the petition is concerned, leaving his motive out of our consideration, then how much more will earnest and persevering prayer prevail with God, who wants to grant our requests, and has been waiting for a suitable opportunity to give us what is most needful for us.

It is easy to think of a number of sufficient reasons why we should persevere in prayer. To begin with, prayer has an educating effect upon ourselves. Often we begin to pray for something, without much heart in the prayer, but after repeatedly asking, we come to feel a deep sense of the fitness to our case of that for which we pray, and then go on pleading for it with even a strong passion of desire. So we are sometimes taught to pray for what is most needful for us by the simple practice of prayer. Our worldliness and selfishness become less obtrusive the oftener we appear before God. The resistance of our will to what appears to cross our pleasures or interests diminishes as we stand in the clear light of the Divine presence, uncovering the secrets of our hearts in prayer.

Again, persistence in prayer has a tendency to make us workers together with God in bringing the universe to acknowledge His will. If every suitable prayer was answered on the moment, the natural effect would be that we would come to think that we need only ask and receive; and then work in the direction of what we ask, which is the true seeking, would be neglected. But persevering prayer keeps

our hearts in sympathy with the mind and plans of God for the world, and our hands actively employed in works calculated to bring the world into the condition we seek for it in our prayers.

The duty of persevering in prayer also develops reverence in us in approaching God. We come to understand that prayer is something different from an order issued by one who has a right to command. We have heard prayers based upon precious promises, and for things suitable enough in themselves, but presented in a tone of command which destroyed every feeling in the heart of the hearer which ought to be associated with prayer. Our human hearts are so subject to little deceptions practised upon themselves, and when raised wholly above this habit they revert to it so easily, and show constantly such a tendency to turn back to their old ways, that we need constant discipline to keep us above this danger. The duty of repeated prayer is a part of this helpful discipline.

But among the reasons for which persevering prayer is enjoined we may not include the idea that God, like some men, has to be coaxed into giving what is sought. Every prayer that is right goes up to Him the first time to find Him willing to grant it. He wants to give what is best before we ask for it. We cannot understand all that is involved in the connection which prayer keeps up between earth and heaven, but in view of the Deity's character as revealed to us in the Word, we may safely say that persevering prayer does not prevail because, after being often

asked, the great Father of all becomes more willing to grant than He was when first the petition climbed up to the height of His throne.

The Holy Spirit is constantly in us, prompting us to go forward and repeat again and again the requests we have made unto God, and to labor and live in sympathy with our petitions.

3. Another help we receive from His ministry is that He gives us the right spirit in which to ask for what we should ask. Over the greater portion of the wide field of our prayers we must lay the conditional provision, "Thy will be done." That includes actual suffering, as well as many privations. To go to the throne in earnest prayer, and while asking for many things that appear manifestly for our good, and for the advancement of the kingdom of God, to say, "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done," is only possible after much experience and discipline has poured the light of great wisdom upon our minds. Yet to be able to make just that prayer at all times is alone the proof of our having the right spirit in all our petitions. When we reach that eminence of correct feeling, we have learned the supreme lesson of our lives. But how much forbearance from God, how much patient tuition from the Spirit in us, how many falls, and how great the help, before we can stand at that elevation. Paul went with his affliction not once, but thrice. Through persevering prayer he at length learned in what spirit to receive the mysterious dispensations of Divine Providence, and how, in humble

dependence upon the assurance of the sufficiency of the favor of his Heavenly Father, he learned to labor on in patience and faith, though some wrongs were not yet made right, and, so far as he could see, never would be in this world.

And One who rises inconceivably above Paul in spiritual stature gives us the same example. On that night of terrible memories He went with two others into the garden of Gethsemane, and leaving them He went forward into the darkness alone, and there among the overhanging olive trees He fell prone upon His face in deep, earnest prayer. There He remained for something like an hour, and the awful burden of His petition was that, if possible, the cup given into His hands might pass from Him, but if not, "not as I will, but as Thou wilt." After that hour of agonizing appeal was there no peace in His heart? Did He not look forward with calmness toward the impending doom? Was there not a sweet restfulness upon His spirit when He turned and walked back to the place where He left His most trusted friends? He found them asleep, and almost immediately He turned and went back again to the same dark spot, and prostrating Himself, prayed as before. Now surely the spirit within Him has become calm, and is ready for all that can be heaped upon Him. Coming back He finds His friends still asleep. Then a third time He goes away alone, and fights the same hard battle in prayer, and when the third time He returns His all-perfect manhood is conqueror. The battle with all the powers

arrayed against Him is now fully won. The calm of a great peace has settled down upon His human soul. He has won in His supplication, and winning there He has won everywhere.

Oh, it is not a little thing done for us by the Spirit in educating us into a proper spirit in which to appear before God in all the prayers we offer, and in enabling us ever to say, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Without the help of the Spirit in this, our poor humanity would break loose, and in mighty rebellion against nature and against God, would assert itself as supreme over all things in earth. We would fight against repression, and against discipline, although the highest lesson—and the hardest because it is the highest—which we have to learn in this earthly pilgrimage, is to choose—not merely to accept, but to choose—and to desire and pray for God's will in preference to our own. That is the true spirit of all prayer, and is possible to any only as they are taught and moulded by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

4. A fourth result of this ministry of the Spirit to us in prayer is in filling us with a prayer which no language can ever express.

The language of the text is, "groanings which cannot be uttered." The word "groaning" must here have the same meaning as in the passages immediately preceding the text. It signifies an appeal which is made by deep distress, or strong desire, or sharp piercing pain. It is a deep sense of need which cannot find any expression in language or in intelligible signs.

This kind of praying is not reached by groaning from a sense of duty, in a prayer-meeting, or when there is some one present to hear, any more than the highest tones of Christian joy are reached by shouting from a sense of duty. The groans here spoken of are unutterable. A groan usually finds utterance through the lips, just as words find utterance through the same avenue. But a groan which is unutterable means a strength of passionate desire which despairs of finding any natural expression. The Spirit creates such a weight of desire in the heart. He will turn a great sorrow, or overwhelming disaster in life, into the channel of a mighty, all-mastering desire for God, or He will carry the soul in the deepest anguish it can know up to God in unspoken prayer.

That is only a feeble presentation of the meaning contained in these words. We must draw upon our own experience and observation of feelings which cannot find expression in language. A father sat with his beautiful daughter of six or seven years upon his knee, and, in the loving parlance in which all parents are wont to indulge, he asked the child how much she loved him? She replied:

"More than anything."

"More than anything?" said he; "but do you love me more than all your playthings?"

"Yes!" she exclaimed with warmth, "I love you more than all my playthings."

"But," said he, "do you love me more than all your nice dresses and beautiful ribbons."



"Oh, yes, papa," she replied, with some impatience in her tone, "you know that I love you more than them."

"Yes, but," said he, "when I get old, and am wrinkled, and bent, and poor, and have to wear rough clothes, and eat poor food"—but before he could ask her if she would love him then, she burst into tears, and said :

"Now, papa, stop. You shall never be so poor as that."

He did not think that she fully understood all that he meant, so after a moment he began again in the same strain :

"When I am very old, and all wrinkled, and bent, and poor, and have no means of getting food and clothes, will you love me then?"

But again, before he could finish his question, the beautiful child threw her arms around his neck, and began to kiss him and to cry, saying, passionately : "That can never be, papa. I love you, and I will love you always."

Now, whatever else that father learned by this test of the child's feelings, he certainly had learned that her love was deeper than language could express. It rendered her incapable of thinking of him as abjectly poor. It was, truly, an unutterable love.

This is an imperfect illustration of feeling that is beyond expression. Every saint, in his experience of walking with God, has had some deep passages in which he could not tell the strength of desire, or pain,

or submission, and so, bowing under the hand Divine, he would put a volume of meaning into the words, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!" It is when the flood-tide of feeling means neither anguish wholly nor joy wholly, but the anguish partakes something of joy, and the joy has some tinge of anguish in the cup, and he is baffled between a shout and cry of pain; but over all a feeling of complete submission climbs to the surface, and, afraid to trust his own words, more than a volume of prayer is thrown out in the one sharp cry, "Thou knowest all, Lord!"

There are experiences of pain so intense, and deep, and severe, and the visitation is so bewildering, our most enlightened thought comes so far short of understanding why such bitterness should fall upon our way, and we are so far from being able to see any possible good that can result from the sore affliction, that our overburdened spirits, wishing of all things to be true to God, can only cry out, "Thy will be done," and then patiently wait until, either in time or eternity, God shall stoop to our weak understandings and give us the full explanation.

And so there are times of deep, rapt communion with God, in which a sense of His presence more than fills the soul to overflowing, and no words are sufficient for the passionate joy; and the whole life and thought are drawn into the current, and every deed and look and sigh is part of one long, glad outburst of praise.

But having said all these things with reference to

the prayer in groanings which cannot be uttered, we know that we have come far short of setting forth the full meaning. A child might as well try to pass over a mountain at a stride, or a flower-cup which loves the drop of dew to take in the whole vast ocean, as we by any human comparisons to measure the infinite meaning of these measureless words. They contain everything that can ever possibly enter into human longings, and passionate cries, and sacraments of pain, and tumultuous coronation outbursts of joy, and all those fathomless depths of inexpressible desire, and hope, and mighty, conquering assurance, in the human soul, which no sounding line of language has ever reached. The Spirit in us releases them all, and when released their meaning is all prayer.

III. A number of questions arise out of this study of the work of the Spirit in helping our infirmities, and in making intercession for us, which are closely connected with the main object of this work.

1. How is prayer connected with guidance? If our prayers are directed by the Spirit, seeing that He cannot err, and will only direct us aright, if we ask that we may have guidance in any matter, are we not sure of receiving, whether it be in secular or spiritual things? To this it may be said that the Spirit's intercession does not necessarily prevent the growth in us of strong desires which are due to our worldly conditions, and which may not be acceptable to the Divine will. In such cases the Spirit simply gives us submission under the refusal of what we ask.

Before we accept the conviction that guidance depends upon our asking for it, let us go back to a preliminary truth concerning the Spirit's work with men. That is, that He is in some measure present with every man on the face of the earth. What He does for the most favored saint He is equally willing to do for all. The plans of the Divine mercy are designed equally for all men. The Spirit is constantly striving to draw all within the scope of those plans. This work He never gives over in the case of any one until often resisted and grieved, and by long-continued and persistent opposition, His mission is wilfully rejected. Never until then is any one abandoned by Him. It follows, therefore, that the saint has no advantage over the most wicked man which that man might not enter upon the possession of at any moment if he would submit himself wholly to the will of God. All that He is actually doing at any time for the highest saint He is at all times willing to do for the worst sinner.

But while we recognize the universality of the Spirit's favors, let us by all means pray for guidance in all that engages our hand or thought. One high advantage will assuredly be gained. That is, that the person who prays for guidance will be much more susceptible to the promptings of the Spirit in him, and therefore much more likely to follow where they lead, which will always be in the right way. He will also more clearly discern the guiding hand of God in experiences which lead him in a way directly contrary to

that which he desired to pursue when he began to pray, and which develop for him results which appear anything but favorable to his worldly estate, or present comfort and happiness. And often, indeed, will the guidance received from on high press him thus against his present inclinations.

On the days when he prays most earnestly for direction, he may make investments in lands or stocks which in the end will bring him loss instead of profit. A prayerful spirit will help him to accept his allotment in life with patience, and even thankfulness, and will prevent him from thinking that God's guidance must always bring present advantage.

Prayer will also aid our blind instincts to receive the truth that always what is best for the soul is also best for the body. That award of temporal advantage in life's distribution which most enriches the soul at last, is assuredly best for us in this world, though it may be hard at the time to receive it, and to be thankful for it.

It is also true that prayer for guidance will assuredly be answered in keeping him who prays from ways of sin and error.

If, then, the question is, "Shall I not be so directed that I will realize the highest spiritual good, if I ask for it in prayer?" I answer, "Yes, assuredly and always." In this there can be no failure. But if it includes the idea of such direction as will secure me against worldly loss and inconvenience, or against my enemies triumphing over me, then no positive assur-

ance can be given. If I was in the mind of a perfect Christian, I would care nothing about worldly loss or gain, or about my enemies triumphing over me. Care about any such things is proof of a truly worldly mind. If we are in the right mind to be guided perfectly by the Spirit, we will be satisfied to know that our spiritual life is safe under His watchful care, and we shall not be allowed to forfeit heaven, and we will contentedly and happily leave the temporal to His thought and administration.

But the one thought not to be entertained is that guidance is the special privilege of those who pray for it. It is possible for very good men to find a large share of their Christian comfort in the fact that religion secures them many special advantages over their unconverted neighbors. But seeing that God is ever willing to open the same gates of blessing upon the worst of men, if they would humbly enter, a truly Christian spirit will delight in the prospect of all the unsaved coming up to the highest level of comfort and advantage. The last feeling admissible in any Christian heart is that of vaunting one's self over the unsaved, or a disposition to build upon any worldly advantages which our devotion to God may bring into our lives. It is possible to begin with true devotion to God, and to end by so yielding to the deceitful wiles of our own hearts that our religion will be little more than a comparison of our worldly advantages, through our religious profession, with the condition of the unconverted. Sincere prayer will be answered with

such guidance as will bring more noble feelings into our hearts.

2. Should we not pray about everything in life? Yes, no trifles are too small, and of too little consequence, to be carried up to Him who knows the little as well as the great. We have already illustrated that many trifles will be no more than trifles forever, worthy only to be forgotten by God and men, but that the thing in appearance of the least importance may under God be pregnant with momentous consequences, and therefore our spirit should always treat small things as possibly God's great messengers for weal or woe. It is certain that trifles are often the occasions of the greatest sins. A chance meeting with a stranger has resulted in the ruin of a soul. A letter received to-day may determine a step which will lead into temptations which will overthrow a character. Stooping to pick a bit of paper from the walk has led to the recognition of a long-lost friend, and thence to the revival of habits that delivered up a life to wreck and disaster. It is against mere trifles in appearance that we need the most constant watchfulness. Through them the evil one moves to our destruction, by them the Almighty reaches eternal destinies. Carry them to God in prayer, by all means, but don't think that because you have prayed about them, it cannot be that in shop, office or kitchen anything can go differently from what promotes your present pleasure or convenience.

His plans reach farther than ours. Ours are all confined to a narrow space. They are shut up wholly to

time. His sweep out into the infinities. Eternity alone is vast enough for their whole scope. It is our highest honor and exaltation that He takes us into those mighty and wondrous plans of His which sweep through eternity. What is the ticking of the clock in time, is an hour-stroke in eternity. We shall hear both. Let us not be so intent upon the ticking now that we become deaf to the great stroke which measures the eternal years.



## IX.

### *Filled with the Spirit.*

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”—EPH. v. 18.

**W**E have here an allusion to the orgies frequently indulged in in the worship of Bacchus. Some wise men who taught sobriety as a rule of life would grant much indulgence, and even wink at drunkenness in those who worshipped the god of revelry.

Paul calls the attention of Christian people to these exhibitions of unrestrained passion, and warns them against any similar weakness. They are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and are, therefore, to be subject to constant self-restraint.

Some have inferred from this text that the outward manifestations of the fulness of the Spirit are much the same as the external signs of drunkenness. Hence they have cultivated high excitement in the worship of God. But this is a mistake arising from the turning of a contrast into an analogy. Paul designed to show that the worship of God is a quiet service, instead of being in any way like the loud and unrestrained excitement of revellers. The mightiest saints have been among the most quiet in all the acts

of worship, and in the exhibition of their religious feelings. Every critic admits that John Wesley was a truly spiritual preacher, but sermons which produced the most profound effect are said to have been delivered in a quiet manner.

I. What is meant by being filled with the Spirit? A study of all passages in the Scriptures which bear upon the subject reveals that before the day of Pentecost men were filled with the Spirit to qualify them for important labors and great responsibilities, for the gifts of prophecy and teaching, and for much suffering and endurance.

By giving some little attention to these cases we will be better prepared to understand what Christian people now will realize from the fulness of the Spirit.

1. First, then, we find that when any one was chosen by God for the duties of some important mission, he was prepared for his wonderful work by being filled with the Spirit. There was the case of John the Baptist. The angel who appeared to Zacharias declared that "he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." In this way he was set apart before his birth for the distinguished part he was to take in deciding the destiny of the human race. How through all his earliest years he was affected by this high anointing, and what manifestations of such a distinction resting upon him may have appeared to others, we certainly have not been informed. But one thing does seem clear, that is, that he was through his whole life kept wholly apart from the spirit of his

age. He was at no time borne down like most men by the passion for a footing and position in this present world.

All the Hebrew prophets were doubtless prepared in the same manner for the duties of their high commission. Micah asserts that he was equipped in this way for his mighty work :

"But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin."—Micah iii. 8.

They were all called to the discharge of duties which required no common character and firmness and boldness. The idolatries of Samaria and Jerusalem, and of both the southern and the northern kingdoms, were calling aloud for the vengeance of the Almighty. But all the great people of the land were in sympathy with the gross insults which were constantly going up to heaven. Hence he who would reproach these vices and crimes extraordinary, must reproach kings and all the great men of the land. He must stand single-handed against the whole world. He must be prepared to lay down his life for his testimony. And then, as in every later age, a true testimony for God cost those who made it the sacrifice of the dearest objects in life. The prison and the pit were common experiences.

Hence these men were prepared by a special anointing for their difficult mission. Micah felt himself full of power by the Spirit of the Lord. Ezekiel's

forehead was made as adamant, harder than flint, to stand before Israel. Elijah came like a flash of lightning across Ahab's path, and was gone, the king knew not whither. The hand of the Lord was strong upon the men of His right hand, upon the son of man whom He made strong for Himself.

2. To be filled with the Holy Ghost was also the preparation for the gift of prophecy. It was the endowment given for such teaching as seemed to come directly from the mouth of God. Jeremiah was prepared for prophecy as John the Baptist was for his peculiar mission. The Lord said to him, "Before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." With this preparation he was enabled by the will of God to read the future as an open book.

The gift of prophecy came upon Zacharias in the same manner. "And Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied." We do not read that he had been honored by God in any very special degree before. He was simply a priest, pure and upright in his life, attending faithfully to his priestly functions, honoring his work, and honored by it in turn. But when his great son was born, he was made to realize the greatness of the occasion by an entirely new experience, wonderful, impressive, memorable. He was filled with the Holy Ghost, and broke out in a lofty strain of prophecy, anticipating the wide extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, and its beneficent influence upon all mankind.

We are not informed that any similar experience was given to him at any other time in his whole life.

The history of Elijah, and Jonah, and Ezekiel, and Daniel, is more easily understood by knowing that at times the Spirit of the Lord in the fulness of His power came upon them to prepare them for their prophetic visions, but did not rest upon them as a continual inspiration.

II. Now, what was true under the old dispensation concerning the work of the Holy Ghost will certainly not be less true now under what is properly called the dispensation of the Spirit. When great duties await our hands, when great dangers attend the path in which we are called to walk, when great sufferings come upon us as the result of our devotion to duty, or great sacrifices must be made in the interests of truth and righteousness, assuredly now, as under the Jewish dispensation, we may expect a special equipment by the power of the Holy Spirit resting upon us.

1. All the pages of history, and all the indications in actual life, leave the impression that men are still raised up and appointed by God to special duties, or to work which others cannot do, or are not allowed to perform. God has initiated, and generally carried out by single hands, the great works which have continued to bless the world. As Moses delivered Israel, as David made his kingdom mighty among the nations, as Nehemiah restored the temple and worship in Jerusalem, so farther down the stream of time, Wickliffe gave England the Bible in her native tongue, Luther

gave the world the Reformation, Wesley saved the dead Church, which was allowing the utter demoralization of society in the seventeenth century, and raising no word, setting up no standard of holy, godly living, to resist the destructive elements at work on every side. When any great work is to be done, God fixes upon some individual to bear the standard, and when done that one has filled so large a place in the achievement that it seems to the world to be his special work. To suppose that God stands by such persons, and sustains them by the fulness of His Spirit's power, is only what is in perfect sympathy with the teaching of the Bible and the history of the past.

2. But it was not only to equip men for extraordinary duties that the Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost. Then He was poured out upon all men. His endowments were no longer to be special to a chosen few, appointed to some particular work or mission, but they were henceforth to abound unto every one. There had not risen a greater than John the Baptist before his time, but notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. That wherein the least saint under the Christian dispensation is greater than John, is in being filled with the Spirit; therefore it is evident that the gifts of the Spirit in their fulness, but not with all their former special applications, were to be enjoyed by all the saints after that time.

3. One of the earliest intimations we find that the Spirit had been given to all, is in the choice of

seven men to take charge of the daily administration. In those early days the Christians had all worldly possessions in common, and after a number of Christian communities had arisen, collections were made in one place for the benefit of the poor saints in another. When the disciples in any place had multiplied into considerable numbers, the dealing out to each his proper share was a work of much responsibility, and some complaints had already been heard from the Grecians against the Hebrews because of real or supposed neglect. The apostles seem until this time to have attended to this work in connection with their other duties. But this was purely secular labor, and it was not seemly that they should neglect the ministry of the word for such service. Therefore the apostles say, "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts vi. 2-4).

Now, we find here an indication of a type of religious life in which all participants were habitually or constantly full of the Holy Ghost. This was no doubt true of John the Baptist and Jeremiah, but they were exceptions to their age. Here it is common to all. These seven men were not chosen, and then filled with the Spirit for the work to which they were appointed, but they were chosen partly because they were already

full of the Spirit. They were selected from a large number, all of whom were enjoying the same fulness. To be full of the Spirit was not alone sufficient to qualify any for this work, because in addition they must be men of unquestioned reputation, and their duties required great wisdom, and justice, and discrimination, and a man might be full of the Spirit and yet be wanting in some of these necessary qualities. So that out of the many who were filled with the Spirit, seven, whose other qualifications were satisfactory, were selected. They were as full of the Spirit before being selected as after. There were others who were not chosen at all who also were full of the Spirit.

We find here a clear indication that the fulness of the Spirit did not qualify men for everything. We are made certain that many were filled with the Spirit, and yet neither prophetic nor miraculous manifestations appeared in them. It simply prepared each one for the highest form of service to God of which his manhood was capable. It made him a perfect Christian, but not a perfect man. Conspicuous defects of character, before this anointing was received, if not of the moral or spiritual nature, still remained in him after it.

III. Let us now enquire definitely what the fulness of the Spirit means to Christians of every grade in the present time.

1. The first thing indicated is that the Holy Spirit abides in men. He is present in His personality with them. This is what the Bible teaches. "What? know



ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God?"

In some way God is actually present in the person of the Spirit, in the heart of every regenerated man. By the Spirit, both the Father and the Son are with each saint, for Jesus promised to the loving and obedient in every age and land, "We will come unto him and make our abode with him." The hope of the gospel is "Christ in you the hope of glory."

Our human language can scarcely be expected to convey any full idea of all that is meant by God in us. How does His presence affect us? By what signs can we distinguish the good in us which is His immediate gift, from that which is only an outburst of the better side of our human nature? Definitions cannot give an outline to everything. The sharp edge of accurate distinctions cannot cut everywhere. The world of the human heart is so complex and involved that, like a path in the depths of a dense forest, we can never see far into it, and we are not sure that we discern correctly even what we do see.

If we could know as we are known we would probably find that much which seems to us to be good fruit from simple goodness of nature is deeply involved in selfish calculations, or is an effort reaching through some secret channel after the gratification of our self-love. The old theology used to declare that before regeneration no one ever did any good thing. But that was too strong, because it denied that the Spirit in the hearts of the unregenerate, drawing them into

the right path, ever enables them to do any act well and truly for God. But the striving of the Spirit means good in the heart either of the regenerate or the unregenerate. The truth is that there is no good in any one but as it is given by Him. His presence with humanity is all that makes for righteousness. What is mistaken for good nature, if it is not actually some disguised form of selfishness, is only a lower degree of the power of resistance to the Spirit's work in men. There is resistance to His work in every unsanctified human soul. The resistance may be positive hatred of God, and a confirmed opposition to all goodness because it is goodness. That is the devil's resistance. In contrast with such deep depravity, a person would seem to have great goodness of nature whose resistance was nothing stronger than some evil and degrading habits, or violent prejudices, or strong conceits. Sometimes weakness of body is the cause of resistance. A person at heart has all the goodness necessary to do a generous deed, but his weary body has so little energy that he does not mark the opportunity until it is passed. Two gentlemen carried each a large bouquet. Some children, meeting them, exclaimed, "What beautiful flowers!" One at once tore his flowers apart and gave half to the children. The other walked on, but in a moment wished he had been equally kind. He felt in himself that he had all the good and kind feelings which led the other to do as he did,—indeed he particularly loved children,—but it was at the close of a hard day's labor with him,

and weariness alone had made him slow to perceive an opportunity and to do a beautiful act. He felt, as he walked on, that the Spirit had given him a generous impulse which he had resisted through the weariness of his body. It is not uncommon to see one who has often persisted in the wrong rush extravagantly into kind words and helpful deeds. His course is explained easily. His wrong acts were continued until his power of resistance to the Spirit broke down, and the ostentatious goodness came as a peace-offering to an offended conscience.

In such cases there is only a low degree of resistance. From thence down to the hatred of the devil, and the resentment of deeply depraved men, there is room for any degree of apparent goodness of human nature in comparison with some other persons. But the goodness is never of the man himself. It is of the Spirit dwelling in him. The appearance of natural goodness is due only to a lower degree of resistance in him than in some other, when the two are compared.

2. Another thing included in being filled with the Spirit is that the person has thoughts, and feelings, and tempers, and desires like Christ's own. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." This is only possible by the Spirit of the Lord dwelling in us. "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." These graces become an abiding quality of character in the saint in whom the Spirit dwells. They are not variable, like what

we are pleased to call the good expressions of unaided nature. They are rather the permanent, habitual condition of the Christian's mind and heart.

Some minerals, as the diamond and fluor spar, if heated or rubbed together, and then carried into a dark place, give off for a time a beautiful light. It is called phosphorescence. Many people are like them in respect of their religious life. They never emit any light except when they are heated. They attend all revival services, and every time they are much moved. They follow every new evangelist who comes along, and declare that they never heard the gospel truly preached before. They sing and speak and pray with enthusiasm. But it is all phosphorescence. Those who have known their spirit and life understand it. They are just the kind of persons to talk about being filled with the Spirit, and to bring forward their excited feeling as an evidence of their anointing. But the sharp test of duty, when removed from the conditions which are favorable to great excitement, will prove whether the Spirit is there or not.

Much feeling must not be taken as proof of the fullness of the Spirit, but rather let us look to the abiding temper and disposition, when there is little or no feeling. Do I love those who I know regard me with hatred? Can I forgive those who wrong me? Have I charity for those who err? and patience with those who differ from me? This last is one of the hard tests. A man who can shout his way through a revival to the end will sometimes find some difficulty

in being perfectly patient and sweet with someone who differs with him on some point in theology. A legend represents that a fire-worshipper, more than a hundred years old, came to Abraham's tent, and he was kindly received, and food was placed before him, but he did not offer thanks to God before eating. Then Abraham asked him why he did not give thanks, and was told that he worshipped fire, and knew no other God. At this Abraham became angry and drove him out of his tent into the dreary night. Then an angel spoke to the patriarch, and asked why he had so treated his brother. But the good man replied, "He is not my brother, but an idolater," and that he could have no fellowship with him because he did not believe in and worship the true God. Then he was told that if the Almighty had borne with the poor old man for more than a hundred years, surely Abraham might have kept him for one night.

To bear with those who differ from us, and to help them, is a pretty severe test of the Christlike spirit, but the Spirit in His fulness opens the heart until it truly loves every one.

3. As a result of Christlike tempers, if one is filled with the Spirit he acts like Christ. His religion is not all shut up within himself. It pours out upon the world in a mild radiance of good and gentle deeds. For evil he gives good. For falsehood, truth. For neglect, kind and helpful remembrance. For reviling, the kind answer that turns away wrath. "Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you. Bless them

that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke vi. 27-35). He who follows this teaching gives convincing proof that he is filled with the Spirit.

4. Perhaps the most distinguishing mark of the Christian who is full of the Spirit is the fact that all religious duties are easily performed by him. There is much half-heartedness in religious work. Morality has its own rewards even in this world, yet how many find even the restraints of true morality irksome and a burden. How much church-going has in it no meaning but a fear of being cast out by certain circles of society, or of the distant possibility of awaking in eternity to find that Christ was true, and the realities

of the future state very terrible to all not prepared for them. But some are so far advanced that they value a pure life for its own sake, and for its effects upon society, and the peaceful future upon which it opens an outlook, but yet they have not learned to find a constant, present delight in doing what their judgment approves. A great many Christians are rendering service to God without being able to enter into it with an abounding joy. But it is possible to rise into a better way of living, and it can be reached by opening the soul fully to the ministry of the Spirit, and by surrendering to Christ in a perfect consecration of all to Him for life and death. When we will accept His free offer, the Spirit in His fulness will dwell in us, and make every labor a delight. In the attic of a vast building used for the purposes of a lunatic asylum, I saw a great tank which I was told was kept constantly filled with water, to be ready in case of an alarm of fire. As I stood by its side I thought how easily the water would flow forth to its appointed work. The slightest crease made in the edge of the tank would be instantly filled with water making its way outside. Bore anywhere a gimlet hole, and at once every drop of water in the great collection would begin to press toward that hole, and drive other particles through it. The whole mass of water had but one impulse, and that was toward any place where there was an opening for escape. Then the thought took hold of my mind, how like one who is truly filled with the Spirit! Let any opening for duty occur in any direction—let an opportunity



call—and at once the whole man is bent toward it as to a high privilege. Every thought and feeling and desire are concentrated on that one opening. Whatever he does is done as if the whole man was moving. I have heard sermons preached with the preacher's mouth. It seemed that nothing else in him was at work. The rest of his body, and all his soul, might have been asleep. Sometimes children study lessons with their eyes only. The effect upon them is much the same as the effect upon hearers of sermons preached with the mouth. Charities are often given with the hand alone. Errands are run with the feet. Visits to the sick and the poor are made with the bodily presence; and funerals are often attended by proxy, and sometimes the proxy is only a stately carriage drawn by fine horses. The religion of many Christians is of the same character. It is a low type, and is scarcely worthy the name. It is little better than a dead formality, or a constrained morality. A better type is within the reach of all. Open the heart and the Spirit will enter. It is as easy to receive the Spirit in His fulness as it is to put water into a bottle. A child would say the bottle is empty, and there is nothing to prevent the water from flowing in; but any student knows that the bottle is not empty. It must be emptied before it can be filled. In pouring water into it the neck must be held so that the air may escape, or not a drop of water can go in. Now, so is the Spirit's entrance into a human heart. Man is naturally full of self and the world. Empty him of



these and the Spirit will on the instant rush in and fill up the vacancy. But he will not enter while the soul is full of worldliness and selfishness. The difficulty with our lives is that we lie too close to this present world, and esteem too highly the things which belong to it alone.

If we would once give it up completely, and admit the Spirit so heartily that He could have His own way with us in everything, revelations and wonders concerning the new life and its blessedness would pour upon us. The lingering love for things which ought ruthlessly to be torn out of our hearts and cast out of our lives, and the burden and weariness of formal duties, would be swallowed up in the high spiritual interpretation of our earthly life, and the grandeur of our destiny.

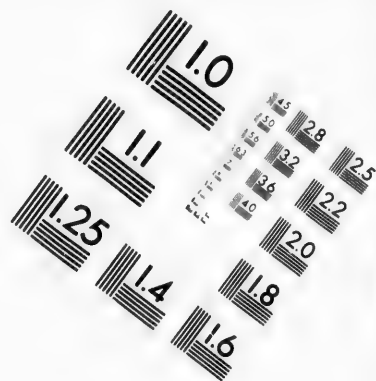
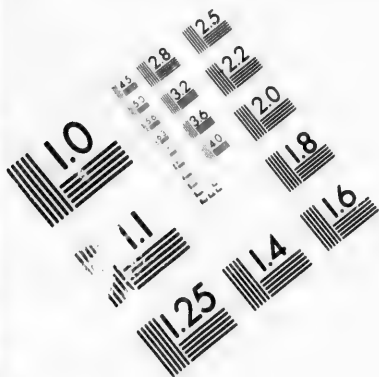
5. Another result is the complete separation from the world of those who are filled with the Spirit.

This was perhaps the most striking feature in the life and character of John the Baptist. As to present comforts, he was below the world's level of luxury and self-indulgence; as to personal sacrifice for God and duty, he was so far above his age that he stood apart from all men, alone, incomprehensible, an unexplained mystery even to the best people of his time.

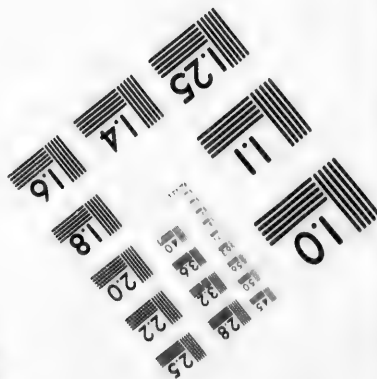
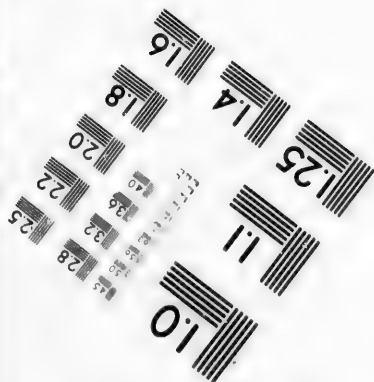
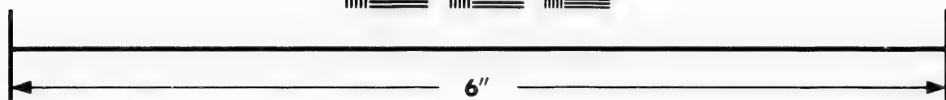
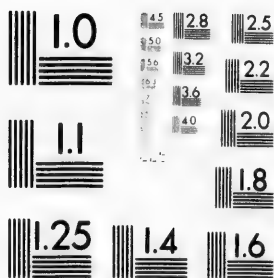
The world is not as bad now as it was then. It must not be rejected wholly, and without any discrimination. It requires some thought and discernment now to separate one's self from all in the world which he ought not to touch, and to accept what may be harmonized with the purest life.

There is, for example, the culture of the age. This is not an offence to eminent piety. All true education is in harmony with God's plans for humanity. The great forces of Christianity can work more effectually with the human race when the intellect is highly developed. Then there is now a spirit of enquiry which ventures boldly into every field. That is of God. It is one of the fruits of our holy religion. The Almighty has written the great book of nature to be read as well as the Bible. Investigations which look into the depths and soar above the towering heights, which reveal philosophies and write sciences, are as divine a service as the reading of the Scriptures. Then there is the intense mental activity of the age on subjects relating to government. A universal interest in political questions is peculiar to this age. And it is good. It is an effort toward the bringing of all men to acknowledge and obey the laws of God. Every improvement in the government of nations by men must bring human laws a little nearer to the Divine laws.

In order, therefore, that one may prove himself wholly under the influence of the Spirit, he need not set himself against his age in everything. Many characteristics of our time arise from the fact that now, more than at any former period, the world is under the influence of the Bible and the religion it teaches. Education and refinement, and exquisite social life, and the possession of great wealth by private individuals, are not necessarily bad because they are characteristic of the life of this age.

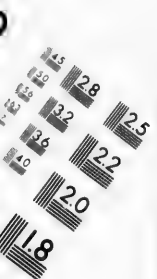


# **IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)**



**Photographic  
Sciences  
Corporation**

23 WEST MAIN STREET  
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580  
(716) 872-4503



Some Christians go to great extremes in trying, as they say, to set themselves against the world. They oppose it just for the sake of opposing it. They will not dress like the people around them, lest they shall be conformed to the fashions of the world. But in avoiding the fashions of the present day they follow what was the fashion of some former time, and any former age was worse than the present.

At any time the true idea of separation from the world is to be above the influence of its maxims and customs. It is not to do anything because it is customary. It is to make it a rule to do nothing because it is the fashion to do it, when we would not do the same thing if it were not the fashion. In some few trifles proper exceptions to this rule may be made. To be separated from the world is, like John the Baptist, to have our line of conduct clearly marked out before us, and steadfastly to pursue it, unconstrained by the many—yea, though all even do differently. Go with the multitude when the multitude is right, but do not go with the multitude to do evil. Many go with the multitude because it does evil. They want to do evil themselves, and they find a sort of sanction for their evil courses in the company of great numbers. They can do what they will with the multitude, but they could not do the same without condemnation if they were with the few. Go not with the multitude to do evil.

In anything the fact that one is in the majority is no proof that he is in the right. Perhaps oftener than otherwise the minority is right. It has a natural right

to resort to force to secure the just issue of its opinions. But experience shows this to be unwise. By submitting for the time, and bracing its feet for a great struggle, it moves forward to ultimate triumph, carrying a majority in its convictions. So that the rule of a majority is only a convention by which peace is allowed, on what many regard as a wrong basis, until they can constrain a majority to accept peace on a right basis.

Judged upon the high spiritual plane, and by great moral questions, the majority is generally wrong. It is only after an intense struggle, engaging the best of earth with the agency of heaven against all the forces of evil in earth and hell, that one forward step can be made in morals, and the truth be recognized by the sanctions of law.

But in respect of spiritual religion, the many are low down, as they always have been. They allow and do things which ought not to be done. The sanction of no multitude can make them right. The Spirit of John the Baptist, in separation from the world, is the only human agency that is constantly uplifting the blind masses. The few, filled with the Spirit, lift their voices in constant condemnation of the love of the world, the bondage to its manners and customs, the devotion to the pleasures of sense, and the building high for time alone, all which are characteristic of this age. Its forms of amusement which, in the name of recreation, lay upon the strength a tax which disqualifies for labor, or for any useful pursuit, must be

opposed by all who yield themselves up fully to the Spirit's work in the soul.

6. To be filled with the Spirit is to be in a condition susceptible in the highest degree to His influence upon the heart in the capacity of a guide. The slightest touch of sin will be felt and resisted. There will be constantly a tender sensitiveness which feels the presence of evil in what may seem to worldly eyes full only of present good. Thereby many connections which could prove only ruinous will be avoided, and, without knowing how or why, the person will walk unscathed through dangers in which others will be swallowed up. He will be constantly under the guidance of the hand of God, and will be so filled with spiritual aspirations and aims that he will never think or care whether the Spirit leads him into the possession of the greatest good for this world or not. He knows, beyond contradiction, that he is led by the Spirit in a path of perfect safety for the next. That is all-sufficient to his enlightened thought.

The great call to the Christian Church to-day is to enter upon a higher spiritual plane. There is need of nobler conceptions of the Christian vocation, of a more perfect consecration to it, and of entering fully into the spiritual meaning and aims of everything in this worldly life. May we not each rise up to the exalted thought, and experience, and living, which bring heaven into this present life, and translate the passing trifles of our flying moments into the conversation of the skies? O that this were the yearning, passionate



desire of every one! O that the language of each might be an earnest prayer for all the power of Christ to be felt in him—all the fulness of the Spirit to dwell in him. Oh, if the hand that was nailed quivering to the cross may but be laid upon my heart, bleeding in sorrow for its sin; if the eye that grew dim looking into the heavens for the Father who came not may but rest upon me, and single me out amid the multitudes of crowding men, and know me; if the lips that in deathly pallor spoke the piercing anguish of the wounded spirit, in the words of fearful lamentation, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" will but speak my humble name, and say of me, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" and if the blessed Spirit, with fulness of cleansing power, will but abide in me forever, and fill me with His fulness, and enlighten me with His light, then even this poor humanity shall love the Father of all—my Father—with a passionate devotion which floods cannot drown, and which shall redeem my soul and flesh from the degrading curse which has swept my family almost to perdition, and at times almost driven the memory of God out of the earth!